

Holy Thursday



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Since the warm and intimate dinner with his friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus, the safety of Jesus' life is threatened. The chief priests and the Pharisees have given orders that anyone who knows where Jesus is should inform the authorities so that they might arrest him.

Jesus himself knows 'his hour' has come so his concern now is to prepare his disciples for life when he is physically absent. How better to do this than to have 'the hour' begin with the evening meal with his beloved disciples?

He stands up from the table and washes the disciples' feet. When his friend Mary of Bethany showed her love by anointing his feet and wiping them with her hair, Jesus so appreciates her love that he makes her symbolic action into a prophetic statement. "She bought it so she might keep it for the day of my burial."

Artist Margaret Ackland did many sketches as she contemplated John 13 and the following chapters that we name the Last Discourse. Let us enjoy her painting of the *Last Supper*. (pictured above)

Rod Pattenden has interviewed Margaret¹, so we have the artist's words to help us to appreciate her intentions. She repeatedly describes her painting as "an image of inclusion". Her *Last Supper* is like John's gospel in that both are works of art which are very conscious of the reader or viewer and both want us to have our own personal responses.

Let us contemplate the painting. Jesus with his back to us? "It heightens the mystery for me to have the face (of Jesus) in a position that does not invite comment. Another thing I like to do in portraits

is to give the impression that the viewer has just interrupted something."

Glance around the men, women and children. Imagine their relationship with Jesus. Which is Peter? Is the woman on Jesus' left Mary Magdalene? Is the wide-eyed little boy the one who had the five barley loaves and two fish? What is their relationship with Jesus? What is mine?

Margaret says, "The breast-feeding mother is there as a symbol of the motherhood of God and the female attributes of God. She is not there to be Jesus".

What do the two red lined faces cut off on either side of the painting mean to you? They shed tears. Why are they crying? Are they excluded? Who are they?

We listen now to the words spoken. What words of the Last Discourse are you hearing? I hear, "I call you servants no longer, I call you friends". Is that what Peter learnt with the washing of the feet? "Love one another... that we might all be one."

I leave you with the following quote:

I have neither bread, nor wine, nor altar, I will raise myself beyond these symbols, up to the pure majesty of the real itself; I, your priest, will make Earth my altar and on it will offer you all the labours and sufferings of the world. - Teilhard de Chardin

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A suggestion: Draw a circle to be your imaginary table. Welcome your friends making some mark to represent each. As you invite your guests to the table of 2022 make a mark for their place. Don't limit, your guests can be of any form of life. Enjoy creating a simple Mandala.

¹Fisher, J. and Wood, J., 1993. *A Place at the Table*. Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, p.49.