

Encouragement Encouragement

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‘And did those feet..’

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‘And did those feet in ancient times walk upon England’s mountains green, and was the Holy Lamb of God on England’s pleasant pastures seen.’ (Blake) How often do we think of feet as a way of service? We know when they are painful or cold, tired or broken- they are part of the means by which we move onwards and forwards. They are often the most neglected part of our bodies and taken for granted. But all our bodies are important to the Lord – and to be acknowledged and used for service, for spreading the Gospel and showing we care.

There is a charity that performs operations for children who are born with defects in their feet (club foot etc.) and enabling them to be able to walk. One such was a little boy who had to be carried by his mother, on her back, even though he was 12, she using her feet to help him. But he could not play or interact with other children, and so his life was in almost total isolation, until that moment after



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operations and therapy when he got up and ran. His joy was manifest and his eyes and those of his mother were like lights after the darkness of their journey.

Recently while speaking to a chiropodist and gaining the inspiration for this subject I began to think of the subject of ‘feet’. I realised that we do not appreciate how they impact our lives. Painful feet often restrict our activities in quite a substantial way.

In Palestine – at the time of Jesus, washing feet was part of the ritual after many journeys were made with no more than sandals and on hot, dusty roads, so washing them was an essential practice of any host. Jesus Himself made reference to this and we are reminded of His comments about the woman who washed His feet and dried them with her hair – an act of worship and thanksgiving on her part for having been forgiven. Jesus chides those present for not offering Him the chance to wash His feet. She also anointed Jesus’ feet with costly ointment. (Lk 8 43-48) Jesus made many journeys on foot, alone and with

His disciples. Looking at the map I am often astonished just how far his feet had to take Him, from one town to another. These places trip off our tongue – but any casual look at a map will show us the distance between each place. Jesus’ travels around Galilee are enough to indicate this. These would be over very rough territory at times, or over sand. He walked to teach and spread the Good News. His feet were an essential part of His ministry.

Today, we are often conveyed in cars, buses, trains and planes, and although walking is considered a good pastime, healthy and enjoyable, in general we

focus more on the comfort of our whole bodies and the speed of travel. In countries where transport is more limited walking is still an essential part of the everyday, even to obtaining precious water. Recently I was struck by a comment of someone who said they could not perform a certain kindness and act generously because they had no car. The Minister replied “What’s wrong with walking?” (The distances were not great). I thought about this as we do forget that we have been given something better than wheels to perform those small acts of kindness and help. Indeed we often say of someone that ‘they were prepared to walk that extra mile’ to help someone.

How many lives have been saved by the bravery of others who used their feet to carry an injured person, in peace and wartime? I am reminded of another hymn ‘He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.’ Feet play an important part in the service of our brothers and sisters and are means of Grace to us. Many people also know the poem/reflection called ‘Footprints’ and the famous picture of only one set of these in the sand. The person praying asks Jesus ‘Where were you when I needed You, why were you not with me?’

There being, in fact, only one set of footprints. Jesus’ retort was ‘Ah, but then when your need was greatest I carried you, so these were my footprints’.

"Walk with your feet on earth, but your heart in heaven."

St. John Bosco

