

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

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



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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

Do we truly appreciate that in the many situations in life when the going gets rough, tough or almost impossible Jesus carries us as He carried His cross to Golgotha, with us on His back. He carries us through many situations and we can derive much spiritual comfort through this. If we cannot walk He carries us. When our feet physically fail us He finds people who will help us.

There are many instances of Jesus' healing those who were lame, not the least of which the paralytic lowered through the roof. Once healed the man simply walked away (Matthew 9 1-8). Jesus also probably danced at Cana, at the wedding feast. When we enter into a relationship with Jesus, we too can dance with Him, lean on Him and let Him carry us... Are we prepared to carry each other?

Perhaps the most outstanding way Jesus reminds us of feet is at the Last Supper, when He takes a towel and washes the feet of the Apostles. This was no mere act of tradition or of hospitality as demonstrated by St. Peter's reluctance to let Him do so. It was the lowliest of tasks, reserved for the least of the servants to perform. Jesus brought him to attention by reminding him that washing was a means of purifying them all and reminding them that they were called to service as the least of all servants, and out of love. This is so important that it is repeated at the Last Supper celebration each Lent. Sometimes our feet get bloodied by the journey of life but by washing each other's feet we act as Jesus did and we are helped to walk again, even up to Calvary.

As that *Special Pastor* said: "The modern equivalent of washing feet would be to look after our aged parents or grandparents, to be very good to our neighbour, especially when there is trouble, to be kind towards the sick, helpful to the handicapped, welcoming towards the stranger, generous to the poor. We can wash people's feet without taking their shoes off at all..." +

So Pause – stand still on those feet and thank God for them and if your feet are not perfect then accept the help of others with patience. If you have no feet then the love that God has for you will carry you in all situations if you accept it. Let our feet help us grow in holiness. Rest on Jesus if you are weary.

Halina Holman

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God in an apron!

'Tenderness encircled us
as He bowed before us.
He knelt and said, 'I choose to wash your feet
because I love you.'
God in an apron, kneeling.
I couldn't believe my eyes.
I was embarrassed until his eyes met mine.
I sensed my value then.
He touched my feet.
He held them in his strong, brown hands.
He washed them.
I can still feel the water.
I can still feel the touch of his hands.
I can still see the look in his eyes.
Then he handed me a towel and said,
'As I have done, so must you do.'
Learn how to bow. Learn how to kneel.
Let your tenderness encircle everyone you meet.
Wash their feet
not because you have to,
because you want to.'

Macrina Wiederkehr, Seasons of your Heart (extract)

Pope Francis

"The whole journey of life is a journey of preparation to see, to feel, to understand the beauty of what lies ahead, of the homeland towards which we walk".
Rome July 2019



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Feasts in July

- 1st St Oliver Plunkett
- 3rd St Thomas the Apostle
- 4th St Elizabeth of Portugal
- 5th St Anthony Zaccaria, 6th St Maria Goretti
- 7th Fourteenth Sunday of the Year
- 11th St Benedict, Patron of Europe
- 14th Fifteenth Sunday of the Year
- 15th St Bonaventure
- 16th Our Lady of Mount Carmel
- 21st Sixteenth Sunday of the Year
- 22nd St Mary Magdalene
- 23rd St Bridget of Sweden, Patron of Europe
- 24th Martyrs of Hexham and Newcastle Diocese
- 26th St James, Apostle
- 26th Ss Anna and Joachim
- 28th Seventeenth Sunday of the Year
- 29th St Martha, 31st St Ignatius of Loyola

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