

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

My first experience of a foot washing service was two years ago at a retreat I planned on internship. The theme of the retreat was nerve to serve and it began with a foot washing service. The middle school and the high school youth that were in attendance participated in the service. When we got to the point of the foot washing we brought out 4 large basins so that everyone in attendance could wash someone else's feet. It was fascinating to watch the reactions of the youth. Most of them looked at me and said, you expect me to do what to the person sitting next to me? My response was I want you to wash their feet. At first the youth laughed, but as the foot washing continued the room became quiet. After the service ended I asked the youth what the thought about washing each other's feet. Some of the responses I received were what I expected to hear. I think some of the first ones were, Vicar Wendy that was gross; I'm never doing that again; my neighbor's feet smelled bad. But then I asked them why they all stopped talking and laughing as they continued to wash each other's feet. There was a long pause and then one of the youth shared that it was a humbling experience to wash their friend's feet. Then the youth began to talk about how it was difficult at first because foot washing is intimate. We had to touch someone else's feet which was a little awkward. After the youth had gotten over the initial shock of having to wash someone else's feet I think they realized what a humbling experience it was. We seemed to let our guard down as we continued – we were all equal to each other as we washed one another's feet.

Later in the service we will hear words from John's gospel about Jesus washing the disciples' feet. During supper, Jesus got up from the table and got a basin of water and began to wash the disciples' feet. Jesus humbled himself as he washed their feet. Out of love, he became his disciples' servant and washed their feet.

When Jesus got to Simon Peter, Peter wanted to know why Jesus was doing this. Peter wasn't thrilled with the idea of his Lord in the role of servant. He didn't understand why Jesus wanted to wash his feet. Jesus told him that he needed to wash his feet or he would not have a share with him. Peter, still not getting it, wanted Jesus to wash his head and his hands as well. Jesus tells Peter that the only thing that needs to be cleaned were his feet. The

emphasis on foot washing is because in Jesus' day the people walked primarily barefoot or in sandals. Their feet were always dusty and dirty.

Jesus goes on to explain to his disciples that not all of them were clean. He was referring to Judas who was about to betray him. Jesus also challenges his disciples to follow his example. Since he had humbled himself and washed their feet he challenged the disciples to go and do likewise. Jesus also gave the disciples and us a new commandment. "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Love one another as I have loved you. Jesus humbled himself. He took on the role of a servant and washed his disciples' feet. He humbled himself as he was placed on the cross and his blood washed away our sin.

What are ways that we can humble ourselves? How do we become servants?

A few weeks ago during soup and study the topic for discussion was service. The group that gathered talked about different ways they served and how others had served them. One story that someone shared happened to one of their friends. The person's friend had been traveling with her children when her car broke down in a neighborhood in another state. As she began looking at the car to try to determine what the problem was, many people from the neighborhood came to help. The people offered her the use of telephones to call a mechanic and family. Long distance wasn't an issue. The people also played with the children and offered drinks and snacks while the family waited for the car to be fixed. The woman was thankful for all of the generosity that surrounded her and her children.

The people in the neighborhood offered help when they saw someone in need. They stopped the chores in their busy lives to help a family that they didn't know and didn't ask for anything in return. Their help was selfless. They gave up precious time to be able to help.

How do we become servants? To become servants our actions need to be motivated from the love that God has given to us. Our actions are selfless. We don't expect or want anything in return for helping someone else. Being

a servant sometimes means stepping out of your comfort zone. It's rubbing elbows with someone who you may not know to help a family or an individual. Being a servant calls us to be involved...to learn about problems that face families/individuals...it isn't always as simple as writing a check. Yes, financial support is an important way to help others, but learning people's stories and being with them is a humbling experience. We help by being physically present.

Jesus sets an example for us...to be humble and to love one another just as he has loved us. Jesus died on the cross to save us from the powers of sin and death. He thought of us; humbled himself; and gave his life so that we might live.

Let us try to follow Christ's example and humble ourselves to become servants and love another just as Christ has loved us. "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.