

We have gathered here on this Maundy Thursday evening to break bread together, to wash one another's feet and to share in the love feast. The term '**Maundy**' comes from the Latin word **Mandatum** meaning 'commandment' or 'mandate'. Jesus was having his Passover meal with his disciples in the upper room. The Passover was in remembrance of the deliverance of the people of Israel from physical bondage in Egypt to the promised land of Canaan.

As Jesus was seated together with his disciples he got up from the meal took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciple's feet, drying them with a towel that was wrapped around him. Washing the feet of a person in West Asia was normally the duty of the most menial slave in the family. When guests would traverse a long way by walk their feet would be dusty and therefore it was customary for the host to wash the feet of his guests before they came in. Jesus takes on this task to show his disciples and us that we are called to be servants for others.

When Jesus came to wash Peter's feet, Peter was terrified because it was simply not done. It was the *shishya* who was to serve the *guru* and not the other way round. However, in Jesus's scheme of things it was the greatest who had to be the servant of all. The cleansing was also symbolic of their sanctification to be set apart for God's use. When Jesus explains this to Peter, that without cleansing he would have no part, Peter goes to the other extreme saying, "Not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

When Jesus had finished washing their feet he put on his clothes and returns to his place. He asked them, "Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me '**Teacher**' and '**Lord**', and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your **Lord** and **Teacher**, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet, as I have done for you." Jesus challenges the disciples by saying that if they acknowledged his leadership then they should follow the example set by him.

As a community we are called to serve others and be a blessing to them. However, this attitude of serving one another and humbling ourselves is something which we find difficult to do. Our neighbouring Sikh brothers and sisters show this attitude of serving others by sweeping the Gurudwaras or serving in the *langars* no matter how rich or poor they are. We will do well to learn this attitude from them.

In the midst of this Supper, after washing the disciple's feet Jesus gives them a new commandment saying, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." This is the new mandate that Jesus has given to his disciples and to each one of us. Our love and service to each other should be the mark of our discipleship. As followers of Jesus love should dominate our lives. We are called to be rooted and grounded in God's love.

As we participate in this service where we wash one another's feet, participate in the **Lord's Supper** and celebrate the **Love Feast** may we truly love one another. May God help us to forgive one another and serve each other in love.