

Maundy Thursday 2019

Archetypal psychologist James Hillman informs us that our most personal experience is in fact the most universal. So, I venture to say that you may know something of what I want to share.

Tonight, Jesus' words and actions invite us into a journey of depth. The question for each of us is: how will we follow? Will we struggle for emotional control, or can we choose the path of love and self-emptying that was set by his example?

Jesus took off his outer garment and tied a towel around his waist and bent down to caress the feet of his friends. As I have dwelt with this image, I have been struck by the fact that Jesus strips his torso. He lays himself bare before his friends. I've found myself thinking on nakedness as a metaphor for so much of the dramatic action we will explore over the next three days. At the centre of the solemn events we will observe tomorrow, is Jesus divine nature revealed through a broken human body. The more I've thought on Jesus' nakedness, the more I have thought about the invitation to lay ourselves bare.

As the story unfolds, we will enter the events vicariously. In coming days, distance and time provide us with a protective buffer. We can look away and we can put restraints on our imagination. Yet, Jesus' action in foot washing moves us in a very confronting and disturbing way. I speak as one who was once terrified at the prospect of having anyone look at my feet. However, one Maundy Thursday I heard Jesus' words anew: "unless I wash you, you have no share with me." My resistance was over.

What is it about the washing of feet that makes it such an intimate action? It seems to me, that the gesture invites us to nakedness in relationship. In truth, my feet like the rest of me, are somewhat deformed. When I look down, I see imperfections. What does Jesus invite his followers to do, both then and now? He said: "I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you". We

are invited to look beyond our limitations in order to enter relationship.

On a personal level, all of my attitudes about not being good enough are summed up by the feet that I like to hide away. But there is gentleness and generosity in the one who reaches out his hands. As we ponder what we see and experienced here tonight, we face a personal choice. The hours of the Triduum may pass with a certain familiarity because we know the events. However, Jesus' action of stooping to cradle feet of his friends, presents a challenge. Will we remain at the safe distance, and perhaps lurk in the shadows as Peter did, or can we find the courage to listen with the ears of our heart, and so open the way for Jesus to come close. His words are stark: "Unless I wash you have no share with me".

Linda Fiske

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Reference Hillman, J. *Archetypal Psychology* Spring Publications 1983 USA.