

## Second Reflection - I am the Servant of the Lord

Then Mary said, 'Here I am, the servant of the Lord, let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her. Or another translation of it "Yes, I see it all now. I'm the Lord's, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say."

Yes, I am the servant of the Lord. Yes, I will bear Christ to the world.

A servant of the Lord ... what does servanthood look like? I can imagine that it brings up many images in your mind. Jesus words "I am among you as a servant" can put our images about servanthood into a faith context.

Listen to the gospel story of washed feet:

John 13: 12 - 15

After Jesus had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done for you? You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

Our servant hood is a towel and basin servant hood. We are called to take up the towel and basin of Jesus and wash each others feet, wash others feet ... and by our care, our love, our compassion bring forth Christ into that place. Ours is a servant ministry - a towel and basin ministry - an active participation in the love and compassion of God for each other and for the world: an active participation with this spendthrift lover God who gives us everything - whose unconditional and inclusive love is a tenacious love, a love that will never let us go.

Who is the Christ whom we remember at the Eucharist, if not, in the deepest sense, what each of us is meant to be: a servant of God's reign and, therefore, surrendered to God in love of neighbour? It is by our care, our love, our compassion - joined with Jesus - that we bring forth Christ into our midst. The covenant of the Eucharist is the commitment to the holiness, health, and wholesomeness that blossoms in our midst where all are welcome and fed around the table of God's justice and love. The foot washing represents the way in which our care, our love, our compassion - our service to each other - can bring forth Christ into that place. It is living into this holiness, health, and wholesomeness to bring about God's reign even as we recognize it already in our midst.

Jesus was concerned that we understand what he had done - "Do you know what I have done for you?" Christ's presence, God's presence is when a community of people are gathered in love and justice. That presence in our midst is one of liberation and healing. It is a neighbour-centered view that struggles to bring the Prince of Peace to birth in our daily circumstances.

A servant of the Lord - a towel and basin servant hood. Our God of compassion and unconditional love calls us to a radical 'yes' to this experience. Can we let Jesus wash our feet - Jesus wash my feet, so that I can have deep fellowship with you. Can we do it? And can we do it for each other? This is a radical 'yes' to God's question - will you bring Christ to birth in your life? Yes, to this

experience, though I am weak and sinful - I come just as I am without one plea ... and am brought into a community of inclusion and equality

In Jesus' symbol - gift to us - of a towel and basin servant hood - we see how the presence of God is brought into the situation: God incarnates Jesus ever anew in us who are Christ's body today. God - friend of the poor, liberator of the oppressed, child among children, persecuted among those seeking justice, voice for transformation - is our God, and can only be made present in and through us. This is why the foot-washing was so important. This is why Jesus asks us the question: Do you know what I have done to you? Commitment and belonging - it is found, and continues to find, its expression in service, in humility, in acceptance and inclusivity. It is found in radical caring for each other.

I have a dream ... I too have a dream - a dream that begins to build in intensity during the Advent season, a dream that one day, because we have said yes to bringing forth the Saviour of the world, because we have said yes to a towel and basin servant hood, because we have said yes to an active participation with this spendthrift lover God who gives us everything and whose tenacious love will never let us go - I have a dream that one day people will look at us - look at this faith community - and say "look at these people, how they love one another". I have a dream. Active participation with a spendthrift lover God and in holy love for each other. With God nothing is impossible!

Role back the time to the late 50's and early 60's ... imagine that I have walked in here with beautiful wavy hair, incredible good looks, a flashy silver outfit and an electric guitar - and with swaying hips and low voice begin to sing ...

Love me tender, love me sweet - never let me go - you have made my life complete  
Love me tender, love me true - all my dreams fulfilled  
Love me tender, love me long - take me to your heart for it's there that I belong.

And the reaction was people on their feet, excited, arms waving, feet stamping and voices yelling " yes, yes". I have a dream: a dream for us in my own community, in the Diocesan faith community - a dream for the world.

We are called to bring forth the Saviour of the world, ... yes, I am a servant of the Lord ... called to a towel and basin ministry - to enter into the compassion heart of God for each other and for the world. To love each other - so tenderly, so truly, and so tenaciously that indeed life becomes complete, dreams are fulfilled, and we all come home to the heart of God where we belong.

I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said - and the angel left her. It is done, irreversible, time altered, incarnation. God is made flesh and lives among us. God is human and hiding in the world in a woman of Nazareth, a town in the middle of nowhere, among a people oppressed and burdened and of little or no worth. God is human and hiding in the world in you and me from Vancouver Island, an Island in the middle of paradise, among a people oppressed and burdened and of little or no worth. We are chosen and favoured to bring light into the world and shatter the darkness. Mary says 'yes' she has listened, heard, and taken the words to heart, so single-mindedly that the Word becomes flesh in her. It is our calling. In a moment, in a 'yes', it is done. We become Mother, servant, prophet, bearer of hope to people, a light to the nations - and

in danger.

Bearing Christ into the contradictions of life is no easy task. To walk the path of servant hood into the contradictions of life is a path of humility and service, mindful that God's love is greater than anything which opposes us. We live against the horizon of hope, while standing in solidarity with those whose lives are scarred by doubt, fear and sorrow. Authentic peace, the peace which God longs to give - through us - brings joy, but it also obliges us to pour ourselves out for others, so that all might share in that peace.

There came, three wise men, alone in their loneliness each drawn by Love - the only Star that shone was in the kingdom of their hearts. It was a Star leading them to gift themselves to the image of Christ in the hungry and thirsty, in the face of the stranger, in the shame of the naked, in the sick and imprisoned. And in gifting themselves in compassion to these they found their togetherness and returned to their homes celebrating their belonging to the kingdom of God.

Constructive relationships, built on dialogue and a common pursuit of peace and justice, rooted in a shared recognition of the dignity of every human person - these are essential pre-requisites if we are to be blessed with the gift of peace: if we are to bring forth the Prince of Peace into our world - if we are to welcome the Prince of Peace who is at home in the heart of our world. A spirit of reconciliation and close communion with one another are foundational to the pursuit of peace.

People who cross our path can be Angels bringing messages and blessings. They come in unexpected guises, to jolt us out of our familiar and comfortable worlds. We are inclined to ignore them.

In today's world the Angels that herald the presence of Jesus meet us in the lonely, despised, marginalized, refugees, travellers, single parents, prisoners - often our neighbours, our families, our faith communities. They are not our usual image of Angels.

We meet Angels when we experience faith communities who aim to be alongside people in desperate need of compassion, love and care.

Advent is a time to be alongside, to walk with many people whose lives have been developed in a different and colourful culture. Advent is our time to bring joy, peace and laughter into others lives, to appreciate their different ways of living, to restore their dignity. It is a time for respect, for care, for hospitality, for friendly words, for help ... with no strings attached. This lies at the heart of servant hood - yes, I am a servant of the Lord.

### **Reflection Questions:**

Jesus asks us: Do you know what I have done to you? Commitment and belonging - it is found, and continues to find, its expression in service, in humility, in acceptance and inclusivity. It is found in radical caring for each other. Reflect on this in your life, and in the life of your faith community. What thoughts come to mind.

What place does foot washing have in my life? In our faith community? Can we break bread and

share the cup together without the washing of the feet?

Foot washing is Jesus bringing us into an intimate relationship with himself. Eucharist - sharing the meal is Jesus bringing us into an intimate relationship with himself. What difference does this make in my life? In our lives?

Who is the Christ whom we remember at the Eucharist, if not, in the deepest sense, what each of us is meant to be: a servant of God's reign on earth and surrendered to God in love of neighbour?

The foot washing represents a commitment - for respect, for care, for hospitality, for friendly words, for help ... with no strings attached. It is a commitment to God's cause - to the holiness, health, and wholesomeness that blossoms in a community where all are welcome and all are fed around the table of God's justice.

The God incarnate in Jesus asks us to bring forth - to incarnate in ourselves - in the Body of Christ, God - friend of the poor, liberator of the oppressed, child among children, persecuted among those seeking justice, voice for transformation: is our God and can only be present in and through us.