

Reflection for Thursday in Holy Week



The German painter Sieger Köder trained as a silversmith and painter, he was a prisoner of war during World War II and became an art teacher before studying theology in Tübingen and being ordained a priest. He combined his vocation as a parish priest with his work as an artist, producing numerous paintings, altarpieces and stained glass windows for churches within and outside Germany. He continued painting into his retirement and died just after his 90th birthday in 2015. He said if people were interested in him as an artist, they had not understood his paintings.

The picture, a print of which hangs in my study, shows Jesus washing the feet of Peter, who is holding one hand up as a sign for Jesus to stop, as he is not worthy to have his master wash his dirty feet, yet the other hand is placed gently on Jesus' back, they are so close it almost looks like a hug. Jesus' own feet are clearly seen, they are care-worn and dirty, as the feet of the Peter would be. The body of Jesus is bent low in an act of real humility, so low in fact, that the reflection of his face can be seen in the water. The two striking colours are the blue Jesus is kneeling on, a colour for a king, Jesus himself is in white, representing God's light in the world. Jesus has the towel over his head and shoulder in readiness for drying the feet and the white light extends to the corner of the table to highlight the bread and cup of wine, in readiness for the soon to take place Last Supper.

Before Jesus died, he wanted to show his love and appreciation to his disciples with a special meal, so he chose the annual Passover celebration when the Jews remembered the way God had delivered them from slavery.

All was ready and the meal had begun when Jesus rose from the table, tied a towel around himself and poured water into a bowl to wash his disciples feet (John 13:4,5). At first, Peter was appalled at the thought of his master washing HIS feet, this was slaves work, what was Jesus thinking?

Jesus wanted to show his disciples how much he loved them, he also wanted to teach them, perhaps for the final time. Just as he had served them, so they were to serve each other and accept service from each other (John 13:15). No one of them was better than the other.

This teaching was appropriate as only a few minutes earlier, some had been arguing about which of them would be the greatest in Christs' Kingdom (Luke 22:24).

This is a lesson for us all. Many of us are good at helping others but we lack the humility to accept help if it is offered to us. Love in action is a two way thing, it is good to give but it is also good to receive. As Jesus said to the disciples, they were to serve each other and receive service from each other.

Reverend Irene