

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The connection between the flesh of the sacrificed lamb and its blood painted over the doors of the Israelites after the Passover meal to protect God's people whom He intended to save from slavery in Egypt and flesh of Jesus sacrificed on the Cross, with His Precious Blood poured out to save God's people from slavery to sin is pretty easy to comprehend. Through the eyes of faith we can accept that the Eucharistic Body and Blood of Christ maintain His real presence in our lives.

But, what's with the washing of feet? What's that all about?

First of all, it's important to realize that what Jesus did was nothing like the little ritual we will be playing out with our precious First Communicants tonight. Although it is worthy of our consideration to realize that Jesus did this before the first Eucharist, where He broke the bread and shared the cup, offering them as His Body to be broken and His Blood poured out for our salvation.

The setting for the Last Supper was 1st century Jerusalem. People walked to where they were going. There were no cars. If anyone rode anything, it was either on the back of a donkey or the back of a camel. Perhaps the Roman soldiers rode horses back and forth. Goods were hauled to market on wagons pulled by teams of oxen. Therefore, the dusty roads that people walked was strewn with all kinds of waste, including the poop of the horses and donkeys, camels and oxen. When they entered a house to eat, they, of course, washed the grime of the streets from their hands and their faces before they sat down to eat.

But, then, they also didn't have a table and chairs, as we do. Rather they reclined on a rug on the floor, resting their left arm on pillows, eating with their right hands, and tucking their feet behind them, quite close to the person sitting beside them. Therefore, considering where their feet had been, it was necessary that their feet be washed. In the homes of the rich people, there were servants to perform this task. However, where there were no servants, the work of washing the feet of those at table always fell to the youngest child in the family. They wouldn't complain because they were raised to know that was their responsibility.

As Jesus disciples were gathering to eat the Passover meal, they had been arguing over which of them was the greatest. Can't you just see Jesus rolling his eyes as they chattered back and forth. Finally, arriving at the place where they were to take the meal, quietly as they washed their hands and their faces, Jesus removed his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and went from one to the other washing their dirty, stickin' feet. Peter, realizing the greatness of Jesus, says, "Oh, no, You will never wash my feet". Jesus tells him if he doesn't allow him to wash his feet, he can't be His disciple. Then, Jesus explains, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master', and rightly so, for

indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

It was only after Jesus had done this work of the lowliest servant that He offered his disciples the gift of Himself in the First Eucharist. What He wants us to realize is that if we are to really share in His Life, we must do as He has done—humbly serving the needs of others.

As Deacon Gene and I prepare to wash your feet, Children, know that we take the place of Jesus in showing how much He loves you, and I hope that as you experience this love that you become just as loving to other people in your lives.