

HOLY THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2016

THIS YEAR, FOR SOME REASON, THE DRAMA OF HOLY WEEK IS MORE OBVIOUS TO ME.....

BEGINNING, OF COURSE, ON SUNDAY WITH JESUS' JOYFUL AND COLORFUL ENTRANCE INTO THE CITY OF JERUSALEM FROM THE EAST OVER THE MT. OF OLIVES AND DOWN THRU THE KIDRON VALLEY BEFORE CLIMBING UP THE HILL TO THE CITY AND A GRAND ENTRANCE....

ON MONDAY WE HAD THAT TOUCHING SCENE OF MARY, THE SISTER OF LAZARUS, WASHING THE FEET OF JESUS WITH THAT EXPENSIVE OIL AND THE DRYING OF HIS FEET WITH HER HAIR....AROMATHERAPY!

A MOVING EXPRESSION OF WHAT WE WOULD CALL ANTICIPATORY GRIEF...

SOMEHOW MARY INTUITS JESUS' LAST DAYS AND WORDS ARE AN INADEQUATE MEANS OF EXPRESSING HER GRIEF

HER FEELINGS FOR THIS MAN

SO TOUCH, EVEN CARESSING IN A PERSONAL WAY COME TO THE FORE...

WE WOULD CALL IT A FOOT MASSAGE

OF COURSE, IT REMINDS ME OF WHAT I'VE TALKED ABOUT BEFORE HERE...

MY MOTHER'S LAST FULL DAY.....

SHE CALLS EACH OF US BY NAME AND IN TURN SHE HOLDS OUR HANDS

AND WE TAKE TURNS CARESS EACH OTHER'S HAND FOR SEVERAL MINUTES....

A FINAL GIFT THAT I STILL CARRY WITH ME AND CAN RECALL AND OPEN AT ANY TIME...

SOMETIMES OUR EMOTIONS ARE SO STRONG AND INTENSE OUR WORDS ARE WOEFULLY INADEQUATE.....

THAT IS OFTEN THE CASE WHEN WE ARE ANTICIPATING THE FINAL MOMENTS OF SOMEONE'S LIFE....

AND THEN THE LAST TWO DAYS WE HAVE BEEN HEARING ABOUT THE BETRAYAL OF ONE OF JESUS CLOSEST FOLLOWERS.....

AND A HINT THAT ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP IS ABOUT TO DENY EVEN KNOWING JESUS.....

THE TENSION IS MOUNTING, THE GNOOSE IS TIGHTENING....

THE DAY OF RECKONING IS HERE....

THERE MUST HAVE BEEN CERTAIN FEELING OF FUTILITY IN THE AIR....

PERHAPS EVEN A SENSE OF EXASPERATION.....

AND EVEN A SENSE FOR JESUS THAT EVERYTHING HE HAS BEEN

TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH IS BEGINNING TO CRUMBLE AROUND HIM....

AS THIS DIVERSE BUT RATHER ORDINARY GROUP OF MEN COME

TOGETHER FOR WHAT TURNS OUT TO BE THERE LAST MEAL

TOGETHER....

JESUS' AGENDA MUST HAVE BEEN RATHER FULL.....

THE NEED TO SHARE ONE LAST TIME WHAT WAS MOST IMPORTANT MUST HAVE BEEN ACUTE.....

A CHANCE TO LEAVE BEHIND WHAT IS MOST PRECIOUS TO HIM....

A MEAL ALWAYS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD COMMUNITY....

THIS MEAL WAS HIS LAST OPPORTUNITY.....

TO LEAVE BEHIND A COMMUNITY

SAYING GOOD BYE CAN BE SO DIFFICULT, BUT SO IMPORTANT...

AS OUR AUTHOR REMINDS US - IT IS NIGHT

THIS IS HEAVY STUFF - IT IS DARK - IT IS SOLEMN....

BUT IT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY LOVING THOUGH- HONEST - INTIMATE

WHEN WE ARE SAYING GOODBYE TO LOVE ONES WE DO OUR BEST TO

SAY WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO US -

AND OFTEN WORDS FAIL US.....

WE MUST DO SOMETHING PHYSICAL - TOUCH THE OTHER.....

JESUS CHOOSES TO WASH THE FEET OF THESE MEN AS A KEY ELEMENT

OF HIS FAREWELL GIFT.....

PERHAPS HE GOT THE IDEA FROM THE WOMAN WHO WASHED HIS FEET

ONLY A FEW DAYS EARLIER....

IT MUST HAVE MEANT A LOT TO HIM

IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS GESTURE....

IN JESUS' DAY, A JEWISH HOST NEVER WASHED HIS GUESTS' FEET....

IN FACT, IN MOST HOUSES NOT EVEN JEWISH SERVANTS PERFORMED

THIS ACT....

IT WAS THE TASK OF THE LEAST IN THE HOUSE, A GENTILE SERVANT....

AND EVIDENTLY IT WAS NOT DONE REGULARLY, BUT ONLY ON THOSE

OCCASIONS WHERE GUESTS HAD COMPLETED A LONG TRIP AND WERE

BEING RECEIVED INTO A HOME AT JOURNEY'S END (1).

SO, BY WASHING THE FEET OF HIS CLOSEST FOLLOWERS, JESUS IS

ANNOUNCING THE END OF THE ROAD FOR WEARY TRAVELERS....

***FOR JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES, THE JOURNEY IS ABOUT TO TAKE A FINAL
TURN.....***

***SO, I SUPPOSE WE WOULD SAY THAT JESUS IS GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY
- TAKING ON THE ROLE OF A NON-JEWISH SERVANT***

***NOT UNLIKE WHAT FRANCIS, OUR POPE, DID IN NOVEMBER OF 2013 IN
ROME AFTER A GENERAL AUDIENCE IN THE PLAZA WHEN HE CAME
ACROSS 53 YR. OLD VINICIO RIVA....***

YOU MIGHT REMEMBER THE INCIDENT....

***VINICIO SUFFERS FROM NEUROFIBROSIS - THE DISEASE MADE
FAMOUS IN THE FILM "THE ELEPHANT MAN"***

YOU PROBABLY REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...

***POPE FRANCIS IMMEDIATELY GOT DOWN FROM THE POPEMOBILE,
EMBRACED AND KISSED VINICIO, PRAYED WITH HIM AND BLESSED
HIM...***

***CERTAINLY NOT EASY TO DO - BUT EXACTLY WHAT JESUS WAS DOING IN
THE WASHING OF THE FEET OF HIS CLOSEST FOLLOWERS...***

GETTING DOWN AND DIRTY, IF YOU WILL, WITH THEM....

***AND, OF COURSE, INVITING THEM TO GET DOWN AND DIRTY WITH ONE
ANOTHER....***

***LET US PRAY THIS EVENING FOR THE GRACE TO GET DOWN AND DIRTY IN
SERVICE OF OTHERS***