

March 29, 2018 – Cum Sancto Spiritu  
By Wayne J. Schneider

## Hanging Ten St. John 13:1-17, 31b-35

I believe that the only people that have beautiful ones are babies. Although, the Old Testament prophets said that those who bring “Good News” have them. I am speaking, of course, of our feet. They are not usually called the lovely parts of our bodies. There are no “People’s Choice Pedicures” or “Hollywood Hanging Ten Awards,” for example.

This is so because feet are funny looking, sometimes crooked, ugly, and often smelly too. Feet are utilitarian certainly, but charming? Hardly! Picture having to wash, not only your feet but others too. Having to peel off the dirt and mud stuck on the heels, and between the toes. Probably doesn’t make the top things on your bucket-list.

It’s sensible, then, that this job falls to the least of the servants in the household. It makes Jesus’ action on his last evening as a human, so poignant. In the middle of the “Last Supper,” Jesus gets up, ties a towel around his waist, kneels and begins to wash the feet of his disciples. This is so astonishing, so un-Lord-like, that when Jesus kneels in front of Simon Peter, Peter crosses his arms and says categorically, *“Uh! Not MY feet! You will never wash my feet!”* To Peter’s mind, the Messiah washes no one’s feet.

Yet, Jesus comes as a servant. He knows who he is and why he is here: *“the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God.”* Rather, Jesus washes his disciples’ feet not because he must, but because, *“having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”*

This is an impossible task for most of us. We may tolerate some folks for awhile, even when they become persnickety. But loving them all-the-way? That’s a horse of a different color. When we receive no affirmation, or when we receive criticism, it is tempting to give them up and let them go.

Understanding that Jesus might be a tad preoccupied at the moment, "*knowing that his hour had come to depart from this world,*" we can picture a bit of self-involvement here. We would not be surprised to hear him says, perhaps, "be silent and sit down"?

But he did not. Instead, Jesus desired that these determined-to-be-dense-disciples know that love and faith mean one thing only: servanthood. "*I am among you as one who serves.*" (St. Luke 22:27) It is crucial that we remind ourselves of this daily. If you desire to be a "Follower of the Way," the line starts at the end.

Jesus said that "*a new commandment I give you: that you love one another.*" And *novum mandatum* is the origin of the term "Maundy Thursday." If we want to know just what following Jesus means, the mandate makes it clear: it means being willing to serve others, even if not just their feet but their whole manner of being makes them stinkers.

People will recognize we are "Followers of the Way" only if we love one another. They will see this love in our serving one another. If we do this, people will be attracted to the Jesus they see in us, and we will be obedient to Jesus's Mandate.

It's true, feet are not glamorous, but they do say quite a bit about who are the served and who are the servers. Jesus said, "*If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.*" Alleluia. Amen.