

Holy Week 2022
A Message from Archbishop Anne



The Washing of Feet by Sieger Koder

“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” (John 13.14)

Dear friends in Christ,

We will spend time this week as we make our way through the ancient Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday, culminating in the glorious celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord on Easter Sunday. There are peaks and valleys and plateaus in this week’s commemorations as we leave Lent’s wilderness wanderings and enter the three sacred days.

This 'tending' of time is a holy calling, one which we are all invited to enter into and participate in fully. These sacred days will be lived out in our own contexts, at the intersection between the Scriptures and where we are in this particular moment in our world and our church.

From wherever you are entering into the paschal mysteries may you come to know again the height and depth and breadth of Christ's self emptying love for you in each sacred and very present moment. This week Christ washes the feet of his disciples. This week Christ breaks bread and blesses the cup of wine giving them to his disciples, requesting that they eat and drink in communion with him. This week Christ suffers in agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. This week Christ is lifted up and draws all things to Himself. This week Christ is buried in the tomb. This week Christ breaks the bonds of hell and rises triumphant from the dead.

"I give you a new commandment," Jesus says to his disciples the night before he died, *"that you love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."* (John 13. 34)

The word 'Maundy' has its origins in the Latin word *mandatum* which means 'command'. Commanded love isn't easy, especially when we've been hurt or betrayed - but it is at the heart of our calling as followers of Jesus.

This Holy Week, let me tell you a love story about commanded love by the South African writer Alan Paton. It comes from his book *Ah, But Your Land is Beautiful*.

This love story is about a foot washing that happened one Holy Thursday in the little town of Bochabela in the height of apartheid era in South Africa. The minister of the church, Rev. Buti of Holy Church in Zion had invited one of the highest judges in the land, Judge Olivier to come to the little church on the Thursday of Holy Week and participate in the foot washing that would take place during the service of worship.

In that church people knew whose feet they were going to wash on Holy Thursday evening. The minister would be washing the feet of an elder in the village, Mrs. Hannah Mofokeng, and his daughter would wash the feet of Esther Moloji, a physically handicapped child.

Judge Olivier was asked to wash the feet of a woman, Martha Fortuin who had once been the Judge's family servant and had washed all of his children's feet. Martha knew that her feet would be washed, but she did not know who would be washing them.

This act would be a work of healing and reconciliation, explained Rev. Buti to Judge Olivier, because many people in the little town of Bochabela did not think that white people knew how to love and that made it hard for the black people to love them in

return. Rev. Buti had told his congregation that Jesus said we must love our enemies, but one bright boy said to him that Jesus never lived in Bochabela.

The Judge agreed to Rev. Buti's request and on Holy Thursday he made his way to the Holy Church of Zion. After the congregation gathered together for the first part of the commemoration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, they listened to the story of Jesus at supper with his friends the night before he died.

We know the story well, how Jesus took a towel and wrapped it around his waist. And then how he took a bowl of water and began to wash the feet of his friends, wiping them down with a towel. Peter objected to this gift of love, but Jesus said that unless he allowed him to wash his feet he could have no part of Jesus' life. And so, Peter agreed to having his feet washed.

Then it was time for the Foot Washing to take place at the Holy Church of Zion in the little village of Bochabela. First, the old woman Hannah Mofokeng was brought forward by her son Jonathan, a white-haired man of seventy. Mr. Buti the minister washed her feet and dried them, and told her to go in peace. Then he called for Esther Moloji, the physically handicapped child, who was brought forward in her chair, and for Maria Buti, his own daughter, who washed and dried Esther's feet. Then both girls were told to go in peace.

Then came the moment for Martha Fortuin's feet to be washed. This is how Alan Paton writes about this love moment.

Martha Fortuin, I ask you to come forward.

So, Martha Fortuin, who thirty years earlier had gone to work in the home of the newly married Advocate Olivier of Bloemfontein, and had gone with him to Cape Town and Pretoria when he became a judge, and had returned with him to Bloemfontein when he became a justice of the Appellate Court, now left her seat to walk to the chair before the altar. She walked with head downcast as becomes a modest and devout woman, conscious of the honor that had been done her by the Reverend Isaiah Buti. Then she heard him call out the name of Jan Christiaan Olivier and, though she was herself silent, she heard the gasp of the congregation as the great judge of Bloemfontein walked up to the altar to wash her feet.

Then Mr. Buti gave the towel to the judge, and the judge, as the Word says, girded himself with it, and took the dish of water and knelt at the feet of Martha Fortuin. He took her right foot in his hands and washed it and dried it with the towel. Then he took her other foot in his hands and washed it and dried it with the towel. And as he was doing this, he thought how far these feet had walked for his family. And suddenly he saw Martha and his own

daughter when she was a child, and he remembered clearly how Martha would kiss her feet. So, he thought to himself, if she can kiss my daughter's feet, why can I not kiss her feet? Then he took both her feet in his hands with gentleness, for they were no doubt tired with much serving, and he kissed them both. Then Martha Fortuin, and many others in the Holy Church of Zion, fell a-weeping in that holy place.

Then the judge gave the towel and the dish to Mr. Buti, who said to him, Go in peace. Mr. Buti put the shoes back on the woman's feet and said to her also, Go in peace. And she returned to her place, in a church silent except for those who wept.

After that, the boy in the village who said that Jesus taught that we should love our enemies because he did not have to live in Bochabela said that he was sorry for saying that. And the people of the church wanted to give the church a new name. They wanted to call the church in Bochabela the Church of the Washing of the Feet. Some people wanted to call it the Church of the Kissing of the Feet but that wasn't in the Bible so they left it as the Church of the Washing of the Feet.

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (John 13. 34)

May the healing, reconciling love of Christ be visible in and through us this Holy Week and Easter season as we love one another as Christ has loved us.

Wishing you a beautiful Holy Week and Easter.

+Anne