

# MAUNDY THURSDAY



**Washing of the Feet** by Sieger Köder

**Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.”** Jn 13.8b

Before reading further, take a moment with this painting by Sieger Köder. What you can see? How do the two figures relate to each other?

On a low stool (right) sits Peter, dressed in brown. His feet are in a bowl of murky water and his left hand is raised as he exclaims, “Stop! You washing my feet?” His other hand, firm on Jesus’ shoulder, says something very different: “Well then, if you must wash me, wash all of me!”

Jesus kneels before him, his prayer shawl over his head so that his face is hidden. Or is it? Shimmering in the grimy water below we see two eyes, the outline of a head.... We look into Jesus’ face not eyeball to eyeball but reflected in the mess and muddle of our human lives.

**What do we see as we gaze at this painting in the context of coronavirus?**

Perhaps we’re momentarily taken aback by the washing of feet when, in the last few months, all the emphasis has been on handwashing. Perhaps we feel a stab of sadness that there’ll be no symbolic foot-washing in our churches this year... But there is nothing to stop us from taking time today to wash our own feet symbolically, while imagining that Jesus is on his knees before us, showing us the exquisite tenderness we see in this painting.

It will take some doing. It will require us to hand ourselves over, becoming vulnerable to Jesus’ holy ministrations. Outer layers of self-sufficiency will need to be stripped off.

But what a relief to be able to lay bare our deepest fears and insecurities and to find in the tired and muddy waters of our lives - so badly agitated by Covid 19 - nothing less than the face of Jesus.

**“To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of the world.”**

Karl Barth

## Prayer

**Tender God,  
give us the grace to let you wash us  
and to find your face  
in the turbulent waters of our lives.  
Amen**