

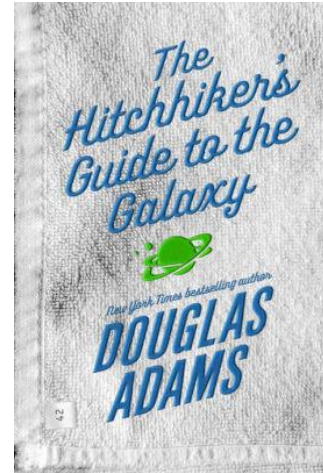
Gospel Reflections for Holy Week (Maundy Thursday, 9 April 2020)

[John 13: 1-17](#)

“So he (Jesus) got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13: 4 - 5)

You got to know where your towel is

According to Douglas Adams’, ‘The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy’, when travelling the cosmos, it is advisable to always carry a towel. The Guide says, ‘a towel is about the most massively useful thing an interstellar hitch hiker can have... It goes on to explain how towels can be useful not just for cleanliness, but warmth, a small sail, fighting (esp when the towel is wet), hiding under, waving to attract attention, lying on a beach or for avoiding the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal. Adams writes, ‘A Strag (a non-hitch hiker) will think that any man who can hitch the length and breadth of the galaxy, rough it, slum it, struggle against terrible odds, win through and still know where his towel is clearly a man to be reckoned with. Hence the phrase that has passed into hitch hiking slang, as in “Hey, you sass that hoopy Ford Prefect? There’s a frood who really knows where his towel is.” (Sass: know, be aware of, meet; Hoopy: really together guy; Frood: really amazingly together guy.)’ -page 31, The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy’, Part One of a Trilogy in Four parts, 1986



Dare I say, Jesus is a man who really knows where his towel is. The towel he uses to wash his disciple’s feet is a wonderful symbol of Jesus’ mission and ministry. Through this simple act, Jesus shows what he means to be his follower...to love and to serve. In yesterday’s reading Jesus asks us to love one another (as I have loved you) and today he shows what that love looks like – to wash each other’s feet (do as I have done). Here the Father’s heart is fully on display. The creator of the Universe outrageously stoops down to love and serve the rebellious people he loves. This is how our God acts.

How then do we respond?

We are asked to pick up our towels and do likewise to wash the feet of our brothers and sisters; ‘Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.’ (v 14-15) His towel is an illustration of love, service and humility but maybe also compassion, hope, forgiveness, courage, quality, appreciation and justice (hmm, that sounds familiar).

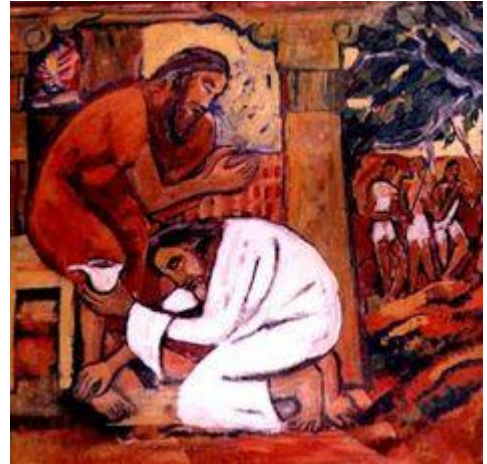
This is the essence of being a hitch hiker with Jesus as we travel the worlds in which we live – in our schools, our churches, communities and homes. To love and serve the people with whom we are entrusted. To carry a towel with us wherever we go.

Each staff member in our schools is especially called to know where their towel is. Over the past month or so, never has this been more acutely needed. What has been required of all teachers, LSOs, school principals and boards is unprecedented (seriously, if I hear that word one more time...). Right now, we need our Jesus’ towel more than ever, even if it is starting to look a bit threadbare. As you; amend one more CV-19 policy, attend one more Zoom meet, write one more community communication, comply with one more (un)reasonable request, dry the tears of one more dog-tired staff member and listen to one more frightened parent. As you hug (can we?) and bring hope to one more child who doesn’t understand what’s happening and just wants to be at school with their friends and the teacher they love.

It is hard, messy, thankless and tiring. And yet these small acts are at the heart of every towel-carrying staff member of every Lutheran school wherever it be in this galaxy. ‘We love because he first loved us.’ (1 John 4:19)

That hoopy frood Neville Grieger is someone who knows where his towel is. He wrote this about servanthood in our schools, *“I’ve often wondered what would happen if we had displayed in the main public entrance or foyer of a Lutheran School, a towel mounted on a simple pedestal, with no inscription or explanatory note. Inevitably someone would ask, **“What’s that towel for?”**...and we could give them the story.”* (Neville Grieger, p 64 *Seeking Authenticity*, 2012)

Over the Easter/ holiday break, allow others to bring a fresh towel and bowl of water to you too, so you can be refreshed for what is ahead. More importantly allow the crucified and risen Jesus to serve you through his word (even if the sacrament might not be available).



A blessed Maundy Thursday to each of you,

Mark

NB **Government Warning:** Hitch hiking is currently not permitted in this part of the galaxy.