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Editor's Letter from Kearsley Newsletter by *Pauline Grimshaw*

We often take certain parts of our bodies very much for granted but although there are many medical articles in newspapers on having healthy hearts, lungs, digestive systems and generally keeping fit, there are very few articles on feet. Perhaps you might think this a funny thing to pick up on but for the first time in my life I have been troubled with a corn on my foot! Only a very minor thing compared with most things that can go wrong with a body but certainly irritating! I guess feet have a lot to put up with. They bear the weight of our bodies, day after day, not just when we are walking but even worse when we are just standing still. They are the part of our body that is always in contact with the earth - the part of us that keeps us 'grounded.' As a figure of speech, we sometimes use the phrase 'keeping one's feet on the ground,' meaning being practical and not having too many fancy ideas. Feet, in a representative sense stand for the thousand and one things of our daily living. In our prayers we might sometimes ask the Lord to 'guide our feet and keep us on the right path.'

We might treat our feet very badly by wearing totally unsuitable footwear and only really notice when we develop corns, blisters or bunions. In the same way we only really notice things going wrong in our spiritual lives when we begin to first feel sore or uncomfortable in our own minds.

Feet need to be cared for - tired, aching feet respond to a good soaking in warm water. Feet need to be kept clean or otherwise they can become really smelly; when washed they need to be dried carefully to avoid soggy skin between the toes. In Biblical times people wore open sandals and grit made the feet feel very uncomfortable. Much of Biblical life seemed to be spent journeying on foot, so that consequently when guests visited a house it was customary for the host to ensure that the feet of a guest were always washed. The washing of feet was always considered to be the job of a servant. No one would wash the feet of those considered the slightest bit beneath them or socially inferior.

In John's gospel Chapter 13 we read of the Lord washing the feet of his disciples, and as in all he said and did, there are lessons at differing levels. First of all our Lord set his disciples an example. The disciple Peter was astonished and at first protested when the Lord came to wash his feet, for it was unheard of for a master to wash the feet of a follower. At one time it was customary on Maundy Thursday for the monarch of our own country to wash the feet of the poor, as a sign of his or her humility and willingness to serve their people and to remember that all persons are equal in the sight of the Lord.

Peter, the impetuous disciple, once thought he understood the lesson of humility and asked the Lord to also wash his hands and his head. The Lord replied that if the feet are clean the whole body is clean. The feet represent the lowest things in our lives - the small everyday things that make up our daily living. Some parts of a person, like the face and the hands, may appear outwardly clean, but if the unseen parts are dirty and grimy then the cleanliness is only an appearance. The parts that others can't see are the parts that the Lord can see.

In the sacrament of baptism, water is the essential element. It symbolises spiritual washing or the desire to become spiritually clean by washing away the dirty parts of our lives. At the baptism of a child the parents promise on behalf of the child, to try to ensure that the child is taught about goodness, truth and love - the qualities that child will need to grow into a truly good and spiritually clean person. If we are good and true in the small outer things of life then we will also be true in the depths of our innermost being.