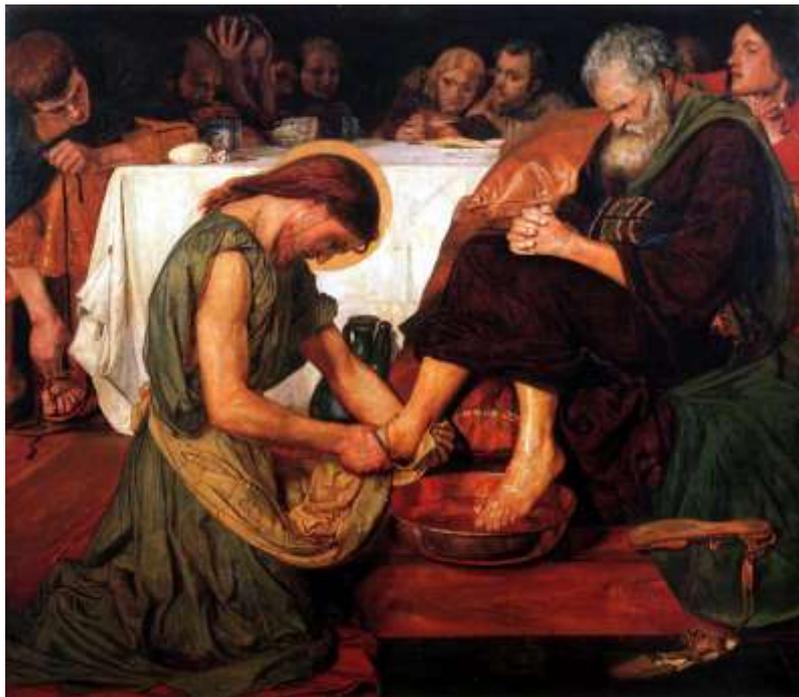


Art work for Maundy Thursday 9 April 2020 – material prepared by Dr Sophia Errey

John 13:1-17 *Jesus washes the disciple's feet*

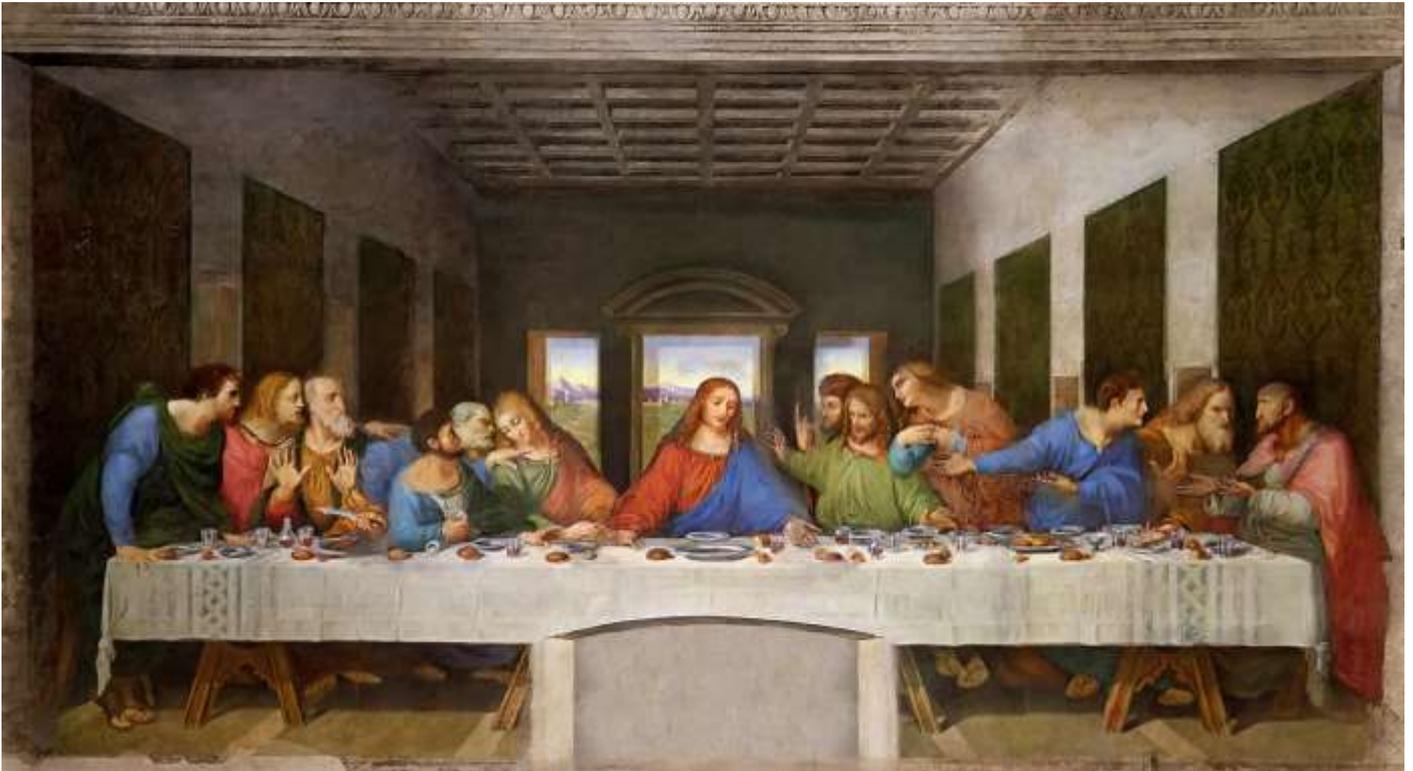
Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, ⁴got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹²After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.



Ford Madox Brown's painting of **Jesus washing Peter's feet** was done between 1852 and 1856 and is a late example of a theme very popular in Western art for around 600 years before that. Brown was a close associate of the self-styled "Pre Raphaelite Brotherhood", a group of young, idealistic artists in the mid 19th century who were opposed to the "sloshy" art, technically competent but, they considered, facile and unreal style then dominant. They wanted to return to mediaeval styles which they saw as more meaningful and uncorrupted by materialistic culture, and to do so by "studying Nature attentively." Strange as it may seem to us, Brown's original painting was roundly criticized as "coarse" for showing Jesus wearing only a loincloth and he then added the drapery. Perhaps now we can better appreciate how the unconventional low viewpoint – so the disciples appear to be peering over the table – their confused reactions, and above all the image of Jesus as frail and vulnerable in an act of loving service have more resonance.

A little later he hands on this meaning “*A new commandment I give you that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*” John 13:34

The word for “commandment” (mandatum) in the Latin translation gives the name “Maundy” to this Thursday of Holy Week.



Leonardo da Vinci's extraordinarily famous painting of the “**Last Supper**” – Jesus' meal with his disciples on the night of his arrest – was commissioned by his patron, Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, and painted in the mid 1490s in the convent of Santa Maria della Grazie in Milan, which the Duke was having renovated. Because Leonardo used an experimental technique rather than traditional fresco the surface was beginning to deteriorate in his own time, and ever since the painting has been subjected to attempts to clean and restore it. However, perhaps part of its appeal is its very vague, blurry quality.

Leonardo's version was an innovative one. Previously artists had usually depicted Judas isolated on the opposite side of the table to the rest and in other ways had marked him out as a character with whom not to be associated. Da Vinci's painting was based on John 13:21: *After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me."*

Painters of the Italian Renaissance had become intensely concerned with how to tell a story through the poses and expressions of the figures in their art works, and Leonardo made many drawings to explore this idea. In the Last Supper he shows us the disciples reacting to Jesus' startling declaration in a wide variety of ways. Judas is the figure third from the left, leaning on the table, his face averted from us, holding the bag of money. Behind him, Peter, responding vigorously, touches John, nearest to Jesus

John 13:24 Simon Peter therefore motioned to (John) to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. *So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"*

Jesus wears no traditional halo, but the window frames his head in an emanation of light as he spreads his arms in an open gesture, one hand indicating the bread.

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane

All of the Gospels describe Jesus praying on the Mount of Olives at a place called Gethsemane (“Oil Press”) on the night when he was arrested. Although Mark and Matthew describe him as anguished (“Deeply grieved/distressed and agitated”) only Luke mentions the detail of an angel who “appeared to him and gave him strength” Luke 22:43.

El Greco's painting (1590) in his characteristic style vividly depicts Jesus' humble acceptance of the Father's will, the disciples cocooned in oblivion, and the group of approaching soldiers under the full moon. However, in Giovanni Bellini's beautiful painting, completed around 1465, the scene, set in an Italian landscape, is dominated by the light of dawn. Already the Resurrection is on the horizon.

