

I recently heard on the news about an Italian Priest called Father Giuseppe Berardelli who died after contracting the coronavirus because refused to use his respirator.

Instead, in a selfless act of love, the 72-year-old Priest gave his breathing apparatus to a younger patient who was battling with COVID-19.

Well if that act of love and kindness wasn't remarkable enough Father Giuseppe didn't even know the patient whose life he'd saved.

After washing the feet of his disciples Jesus goes on to say this in verse: 34

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

Now of in one sense of course the command to love isn't new, because it goes right back to the Old Testament.

But Jesus says it's the way we're to love each other that's new; because we're to love others in the same way that he loves us.

Verse 12 says: When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them. Do you understand what I have done to you?

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another feet.

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

In other words, Jesus tells his disciples to imitate him; the one who for our sakes became a servant and actually kneels in front of us to wash our feet,

And like Father Giuseppe Berardelli they're to stand out from the crowd, because of their love and self-sacrifice for the sake of others.

And you know Jesus says when Christians live by this radical rule of love; people will know that we're his disciples.

So, listen to these words:

When we read the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, we might think we understand why He's doing it for them.

So, for example John was a close friend, who's described as the one Jesus loved.

Then there's Peter and Andrew, who've been faithful follows of their Master.

But why did He wash the feet of Judas?

You see Jesus knew that He was stooping down to serve the one who would soon stoop to perform history's worst act of betrayal.

Jesus was performing the most menial of tasks for a person who treated the Creator of the universe as someone worth no more than 30 pieces of silver.

Knowingly, the One whose name is associated with giving life, got His hands dirty to serve the one whose name would be synonymous for betrayal and death for the rest of time.

But Jesus' example reminds of something important about service doesn't it? It reminds us that we're not just called to serve those who are like us, or even those who care for us?

We're called to serve all people—the lovely and the unlovely, the friendly and the not-so-friendly.

And in John 13 we see love and service, and humility poured out in a basin of water—love that Jesus even shared with the one who would betray Him.

So, as we reflect on this event that eventually leads to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus, what practical ways can we extend God's love to strangers, friends, and even enemies?

Well at this time of national crisis it might not be something as sacrificial as Father Giuseppe, but it could be something as simple as a phone call, a friendly email, or the offer to go shopping.

Whatever it is, we have a great opportunity at this time to serve others as Christ serves us.

And so, I close with some familiar words of the Apostle Paul from his letter to the Philippians that remind us that Jesus left his throne in Heaven to be rejected betrayed and crucified for you and me.

Paul says:

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Amen