

MEDIA RELEASE – Wednesday March 2016

## EASTER MESSAGE 2016

At Easter we are reminded that Christ gave his life for the salvation of the whole human race.

He didn't die on the cross just for his followers or to please his father – he paid the ultimate price to show the world a new way of living and dying, with the promise of eternal life as fulfilled by his resurrection.

One of the ways we Christians commemorate Christ's suffering and death is to re-enact the Last Supper when Jesus washed the feet of his apostles.

In the past this has involved gathering a group of men to participate in this rite, representing the disciples who, of course, were male.

But in fact this rite was bestowed on bishops and priests to intimately conform themselves to Christ who 'came not to be served but to serve' (Mt 20:28) and to demonstrate the humility and charity of Christ towards his disciples.

By washing the feet of the Apostles, Jesus wanted to reveal to us God's way of acting in our human relations, and to give an example of his commandment to love one another as he has loved us.

Since coming to office, Pope Francis has used the washing of the feet rite to demonstrate his sincere love and concern for the most disadvantaged men and women in the community – prisoners, the destitute, the sick. Now other bishops and priests can freely follow suit and show our willingness to be a Church that goes out to the fringes of humanity.

The other special aspect of Easter this year is that it is being celebrated in the Year of Mercy which has been constituted by Pope Francis for us to reflect upon the mercy of God.

God's mercy is shown so clearly in the death and resurrection of Jesus, where Jesus gave up himself entirely out of love for each one of us to save us and give us the gift of eternal life and to preserve us from sin.

But in the Year of Mercy Pope Francis reminds us that we all have a responsibility to share that mercy with people who live around us in the world.

The works of mercy that we have to be involved in are being thoughtful, kind, patient, forgiving, gentle and all of us can give action to that in any circumstances of our lives.

Archbishop Philip Wilson



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