

# Lent Reflection on Art – Week 6

## ‘Washing of the Feet.’ Duccio di Buoninsegna

### Teacher Notes

Duccio was an important artist in early fourteenth century Italy. His depiction of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet is part of an altarpiece, the [Maestà](#), from the Cathedral in Siena and was one of 14 panels showing 26 events in the Easter story. When the work was finished, it was carried through the streets of Siena in a great procession, from Duccio’s workshop to the cathedral, with all the church bells ringing and the day was made a public holiday.

It helps if the children understand that in Jesus’ time people’s feet got very hot and dusty and it was normal for a servant to wash a visitor’s feet when they arrived at the house. The Romans reclined at the table, so their feet would have been near the head of the person lying next to them, so it was important that they were clean! Jesus washing his disciples’ feet is one of the classic stories showing his humility, that he came to serve people, not to wield power over them.



### Explain to the children:

#### Slide 1:

Show the children the painting of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. What do they think is happening? Some of them will know the story of the Last Supper and how Jesus washed the feet of the disciples – draw out of them why this needed to be done ( they didn’t have proper roads, mainly dirt tracks, people wore open sandals or walked bare foot) and the fact that it was usually the job of a lowly servant, not the special guest (Jesus).

#### Slide 2:

This shows how the painting of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet fits with the other panels in the altarpiece. Can you find it? (Bottom row, second from left, above the last supper). The painting is like a very early example of a modern cartoon strip, with each section telling part of the story. Can you recognise any other scenes from Easter week? (Bottom left, Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey. The centre shows

the crucifixion and underneath Jesus being arrested and Jesus with his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. The top right show Jesus' body being placed in the tomb, and then the resurrection and the empty tomb.)

**Slide 3:**

How would you feel if your teacher – or headteacher – decided to wash your feet? Reluctant? Embarrassed? Nervous? Read the passage with the children.  
Why do you think Peter was unhappy about Jesus washing his feet?  
Why do you think Jesus insisted on doing it?

**Slide 4:**

Some churches still wash people's feet on Maundy Thursday (The day of the Last Supper), but generally people don't do this literally anymore. What might be the equivalent today? E.g. some churches run food banks or homeless shelters. What examples can you think of in school or locally of people who 'serve' others and do the messy jobs other people might not want to do? Carers? Refuse collectors? Cleaners? Parents?!

**Slide 5:**

Jesus washed his disciples' feet to show that he had come to serve other people, not to lord it over them. Can you think of anything you could do to help someone else? How could you give a helping hand? (Or foot?)

You could hand out feet template for the children to draw or write their ideas on (see below) or they could draw round their own feet (or hands?) Perhaps you could create a pathway of feet with the children's ideas for serving others (depending on your school's guidelines for Covid-safety.)

## Closing prayer

**Slide 6:**

For our final prayer, you might like to close your eyes or look at the picture of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

If you'd like to make it your prayer, you can say amen at the end.

Dear God,

Thank you for the example Jesus set when he washed his disciples' feet.

Thank you that he was their servant, not their master.

Thank you for all the people in our school and our community who help others and who do the jobs that other people don't want to do.

Help us to be ready to lend a helping hand to other people.

Amen.