

*A Lesson in Humility*, by Fikos

art selection and comment by [John Kohan](#) in the [May 19, 2021](#) issue



(Used by permission of the artist)

Fikos is the pseudonym of a Greek street artist who in normal times would be up a ladder with a brush painting public murals. Working indoors during the pandemic, he created this tempera on paper on panel painting in what he calls a “Contemporary Byzantine” style, showing Jesus teaching his disciples the ultimate lesson in humility.

One striking difference from traditional depictions of the foot-washing story is the female disciple seated on the ground beside the central figure of Peter. She

represents the woman who, elsewhere in the Gospels, anoints Jesus' feet with perfume and tears, drying them with her hair. Jesus, labeled with the Greek word for "teacher," has taken a place well below his students, who watch in confusion and wonder. The untied sandals mark the path to follow. The water basin, resembling a golden liturgical vessel, suggests how different our understanding of leadership might be if we washed one another's feet as a sacramental act.

Says Fikos: "The composition resembles a tree, with Jesus as the roots and trunk and his disciples the spreading branches. They grow out of his life-giving power."