

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Maundy Thursday

Please read through these passages slowly and reflectively before reading my reflection for Maundy Thursday.

Exodus 12: 1-14 Ps 116:9-end 1 Cor 11:23-36

John 13:1-7,31b- 35 Matthew 26:30-end

In writing and reading may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Ubi caritas et amor, deus ibi est :
Where true love is, God himself is there

The name given to this day in English speaking places is "Maundy Thursday", and this title is derived from the Latin "mandatum" meaning "commandment" echoing the words of John 13:34 which lie at the heart of all that we remember this day:

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another"

Everything that we celebrate today brings us back to the centrality of love and our dependence in our own loving on the love of Jesus which is its source.

The church liturgy of Maundy Thursday uses symbolic action and sacrament to hold us in the mystery of Jesus' love in a physical and dramatic way. We experience Jesus' love enacted in service as the priest washes the feet of those who wish it to bring to the present Jesus' great act of washing the feet of his disciples at the last supper: **love shown in the service of his fellows**

We celebrate the Eucharist, the great gift Jesus left his disciples to share in his loving presence and the fullness of his self-offering as receiving broken bread and wine out poured we hear his words: this is my body given for you, this is my blood which was shed for you: **love shown in the creation of communion**

Then we strip the church and go aside to pray silently in a time of watching with him, as he asked his friends in the garden before his arrest: **love shown in passionate acceptance of his lonely path to the cross.**

The symbolic action and sacraments of our worship are not isolated things that happen in church. Part of their meaning lies in their connection with the way we live our lives as members of the body of Christ in the world. When we come to church we bring with us all that we have lived through to offer it to God, and we go out from our worship renewed in the love we will share in the world. Very often in my preaching I will call us to focus on the experience of liturgy, the coming close to God in these actions, but this year I invite us all, on this holy day, in these holy days, to focus on where we are seeing the meaning of our sacraments and symbolic actions in the world around us and to reflect on how what our fellow men, women and children are experiencing across the world might be a profound expression of sharing in the outpoured love of Jesus which is at the heart of Maundy Thursday:

Service

Communion

Lonely Passion

Jesus washes his disciples' feet, taking the lowly role of service as an act of love. In doing so he also teaches his disciples, especially Peter, of the humility that is required to receive the service of others.

For a moment, just pause and call to mind all the acts of service that we are hearing about around us internationally, nationally and locally, allow this outpouring of compassion to touch your heart.

You might like to think about the things that love moves you to do in the service of others and offer those things to God for blessing.

Above all, can you call to mind the love you have received from others in their acts of service to you. This is sometimes not easy to accept. Often we feel like Peter – "it is me that should be doing this for you". I know at the moment many who are self isolating are

deeply frustrated at being dependent on others for essentials. Those who have been the ones others depended on are now having to accept help. I know of NHS staff who are no longer able to work because of health conditions that mean they have to be shielded, priests who because of age cannot minister through person to person contact, doctors, nurses, carers, even the Prime Minister now dependent on the very services they had responsibility for.

Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

For a moment hold the image of Jesus pouring water over the feet of his friends in your mind and alongside it an image or a thought about all the loving service that you depend on right now

Where true love is God is there

Jesus gathers his friends at supper. He takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to them to share:

This is my body.

He takes a cup of wine, blesses it and offers it to his friends to share:

This is my blood. Do this as often as you share it in remembrance of me.

He gives us a perpetual, divinely mandated way to be drawn into unity with him and with each other: the gift of communion.

Those around the table, those first experiencing this communion with him were flawed in their own loving. They vied for eminence – who is the greatest; one would betray him, another would deny him and they would all scatter when the testing came. Yet at this moment by his grace they are one in his love. The stuff of communion: bread and wine, human hearts, is fragile. Bread breaks, wine is spilt, human hearts are fickle. The grace of God takes what is broken and spilt and from it creates a new strength,

a corporate love. In communion we become the one body of Christ.

For a moment just pause and call to mind all the challenges to the way human beings share any unity now: isolation in our own homes, the distance we keep from each other when we are outside, the inability of family to meet, or friends to maintain the contact that keeps them going. There is a brokenness about our lives at the moment.

Then think too of all the signs of a deeper connection that we are noticing now: community spirit and the contact of neighbours, the much repeated sense of being "all in this together", bearing with those closest to us if we are seeing more of them than is usual, rainbow pictures from children in windows, the treasured phone call, the range of internet options that some can make use, even the yearning within us for contact. Perhaps a new quality of presence in our solitude or quietness and the communion that we can enter into when we pray, in the knowledge that others are praying too; the knowledge that because Jesus has died, and is risen, and sends his Spirit we can be forever in communion with him in a way deeper even than the physical closeness he had with his disciples.

Hold in your mind a moment when you have been glad of a sense of deep connection with another person, or with God and hear in your heart: "Take eat – this is given for you, Drink this in, this is my covenant with you."

Where true love is God is there.

After supper Jesus led his disciples out to the garden of Gethsemane and took his closest disciples aside to be with him as he prayed. Going a little further aside he prayed in earnest that he might not have to go through with the coming passion. We see the real cost of what he was to enter into, and recognise in his prayer the agony of anyone faced with insurmountable suffering or foreseeing a future they don't know how they will bear, and even his closest friends cannot share his lonely pain.

As he prays, compassion brings him to be at one with God and accept what he will take up, in love for us all, with a renewed strength.

For a moment just pause and call to mind all those we can imagine who are facing lonely fear right now, all who have to decide to take up roles which put them at risk, all who know their loved ones are ill and can't be with them, all who are ill and are afraid.

May we surround them with love in our prayer:

Where true love is God is there.

For a moment let us be honest about how we are feeling at the moment and hold these feelings before God, talking to God as Jesus did, directly and honestly. Where our truth is, God's love can be there.

As we watch with Christ, we pray that he will watch with all those who share his agony in the garden this night.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep this night and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, sustain the dying, calm the suffering and pity the distressed; all for your love's sake, O Christ our redeemer. Amen.

Ubi caritas et amor deus ibi est

Where true love is, God himself is there.

