

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2024
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER CRAIG LOONEY
1 CORINTHIANS 11.23-26 St. JOHN 13.1-15



DO THIS UNTIL I GET BACK...

The word *Maundy* is derived from the Latin *mandatum*...the day of the *mandate*...the day of the new *commandment*...DO THIS...Jesus says...until he gets back.

The Maundy Thursday Liturgy begins on a high note. The celebrant wears white vestments. The *Gloria in excelsis*...not heard since the last Sunday after Epiphany is said. Our mood is festive.

Jesus gives us two commands tonight. The first command our friend Saint Paul tells us the teaching he has received from the Lord he passes on to us. There is no opt-out clause in the first command. On the night before Jesus died, he took bread and gave thanks to God, and said...

...“This is my body, which is broken for you. Do this in memory of me.”

Then after supper he took the cup and gave thanks again, and said...

...“This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you...whenever you drink this, do it in memory of me.”

Jesus gave a new and radical meaning to the Last Supper he shared with his disciples. This was not an ordinary Seder meal. This was the first Eucharist. And Jesus didn't say the bread and wine symbolize his Body and Blood. He said this IS my Body...this IS my Blood.

We celebrate the Mass and receive the Body and Blood Jesus every Sunday because he tells us to. And Paul reminds us every time we do this we proclaim his death until he comes. Tomorrow we will commemorate his death on the cross.

Tonight we prepare ourselves for his ultimate sacrifice. Jesus is the Lamb of God of John's Gospel...he is our *“full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world”*...once and for all...for all time...an action that can never to be repeated.

The surprise in the Gospel is what Jesus does for his disciples and like the first command it doesn't come with an opt-out clause. It was customary for the dinner host to provide bowls of water and towels for his guest to wash the dust from their feet. The guests washed their own feet, or if the host was wealthy, had his servants wash his guests' feet. The host would never have washed his guests' feet...he was not a servant. .

Jesus is the host at the Last Supper. What he does for his disciples is remarkable. He was breaking accepted practice by filling a bowl with water and washing his disciples feet. This simply was not done. His disciples called him 'Lord' and 'Master'. No lord or master would lower himself in this way. But Jesus does! He kept saying throughout his earthly ministry he was here to serve and not to be waited on.

Peter is caught off guard and refuses to let Jesus wash his feet. Jesus tells him if he doesn't let him wash his feet he cannot be his disciple. Jesus' action was one of love for his disciples. He wants them to show the same kind of love toward each other he shows toward them. And he wants us to show the same kind of love...unconditional love...for others. Christian love is active and dynamic and must come from our hearts.

The conclusion to the Maundy Thursday Liturgy is in stark contrast to the beginning. We have received the Body and Blood of Jesus...now we take the Blessed Sacrament in Procession to the Altar of Repose...our Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus asks us to spend just one hour watching with him. If it is not possible to do this at the Church...we should spend one hour in quiet meditation tonight and tomorrow.

Jesus has given us two commandments. He has given us his Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. He tells us to love each other as much as he loves us. And he tells us to...

...DO THIS UNTIL HE GETS BACK!

