

Maundy Thursday 2025
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
1 Corinthians 11.23-26 St. John 13.1-15



DO THIS UNTIL I GET BACK...

It is the night before the Passover. Jesus knows his “hour has come”...it is time for him to complete his mission of Redemption. Jesus said he came to serve...tonight he teaches us what it means for us to serve others as his disciples.

Maundy Thursday continues the week of stark contrasts. We begin on a high note...a celebration...as we did on Palm Sunday. White vestments are worn and the Gloria in excelsis...not heard since the Last Sunday after Epiphany is said. Our mood is happy and festive. We will end tonight’s Liturgy by preparing the church and ourselves for Good Friday. We will leave the church in darkness.

The word *Maundy* is derived from the Latin *mandatum*...and means *mandate* and *command*. Jesus gives us two commands tonight. They are commands...not suggestions...not optional!

The first command Jesus gives us is to receive his Body and Blood in Holy Communion. John’s Gospel does not give us the Words of Institution. We get those from the Synoptic Gospels and from First Corinthians.

In the Epistle...Paul passes on to us what he has received by Revelation...that on the night before he died, Jesus took bread and when he had given thanks he said, “This is my body, broken for you”...then he took the cup and gave thanks again and said, “This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you...do this as often as you get together...until I get back”.

What we receive in the Sacrament of the Altar is the Body and Blood of Christ...given and shed for us. It is his Body and Blood...not in a symbolic way...but in a real and substantial way. Jesus tells us as often as we do this we show his death until he returns.

The second command Jesus gives us is to show our love for others in the same way he shows his love for us. Jesus takes the role of the

servant and washed his disciples' feet...an act of Divine humility. Jesus tells his disciples they won't understand the meaning of what he is doing until later. When Peter tells Jesus he doesn't want him to wash his feet, Jesus tells Peter he will no longer be his disciple if he doesn't wash his feet.

Jesus tells us we must love each other unconditionally. We cannot place restrictions on loving others. We claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. That means we are committing ourselves to a life of service to others...even when it's not convenient. Christian love means doing what's best for others in all places at all times. It wasn't convenient for Jesus to die on the Cross for us...he did so as act of supreme and selfless Divine love.

Jesus has given us two commands. His "hour has come" for him to complete his mission of Redemption. Our hour has come too. It's time for us to get the church and ourselves ready for what's next.

Before we leave here tonight...we strip the Altar and Sanctuary bare. We leave the Tabernacle...God's house...open and empty. We take the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose...our recreation of the Garden of Gethsemane. We sing a hymn, just as Jesus and his disciples did.

There is nothing else to say. The lights are turned off...we leave the church in darkness and in silence. We watch and we wait!

What we have done here tonight we will continue to do every year on Maundy Thursday. We are following Jesus' commands...

...DO THIS UNTIL HE GETS BACK!

