

We know *why*; because God so *loved* the world... Because He so *loves* you and me...

We take care to remember, and to do, the things that Jesus did on the night before His crucifixion, as a means of experiencing the depth of His love for us. We remember, to keep the story alive.

Jesus is the object of our adoration. As always, He is a participant in our worship. Whenever two or three are gathered together in His Name... Jesus is here.

Tonight is mystical because it connects us with the Source of our salvation, through word and action. We can never be the same after Jesus has instructed us, fed us, moved us to serve one another, and then gone off into the garden to pray...

This night was long and arduous for our Lord. Perhaps we can never fully grasp the depth of anguish He must have felt as He prayed in the garden and His disciples slept. But even if we fail to understand the physical and spiritual suffering of Jesus prior to His arrest, let us dwell on the fullness of His love for the broken world of His earthly time and ours.

Everything about this night shows us how Jesus embodies the love of God the Father. The *Mandatum Novum*, after which Maundy Thursday is named, is the new commandment that we love one another as Jesus has loved us.

Today and always, may our lives be an offering of sacrificial love to the praise and adoration of His Name.

Χάρις τῷ θεῷ, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Ἀμήν.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

2014-04-17

PARISH OF GEORGINA—S. JAMES' CHURCH, SUTTON

The ways of God are not our ways. That is a matter of scriptural truth¹, and for anyone who takes the faith seriously, it is a matter of personal experience as we compare our approach with God's.

For instance, God gave Moses and Aaron instruction on what the people were to do on the day we now celebrate. The instruction detailed what they were to eat, and how they were to eat it. It also told them what to do with some of the left-over blood. Daub it onto their door posts and lintels. While the children of Israel ate and waited, the angel of the Lord passed over the homes with the blood-painted doorways and killed every first-born Egyptian person and animal throughout the land. This "passing-over" was a night of reckoning for the Egyptian Pharaoh who finally relented and freed the Israelites to leave Egypt for their own promised land and destiny. So the great act of national salvation, which still remains so important to every believing Jew, began with a meal. The Jews were to remember this for all time.

For us, our liturgy also centres on a meal. We hear again in Scripture, and re-enact at the altar, what Jesus did *on this very night* many centuries ago. He ate and drank with His disciples, but this time, with a difference. The bread that He took, blessed and broke, He called His Body, the point being that it was to be shattered and given for their well-being. The wine that He offered, He called His blood of the new covenant that was to be poured out for them and for many more.

Can you imagine sitting at that table, as Jesus said and did these things? Can you imagine the looks of bewilderment on the

¹ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD." Isaiah 55:8-9 (KJV)

faces of those around you?

Salvation was the main item on the menu for this night's meal, as it was on the night of the Passover. God's ways are not ours... The Israelites ate sacrificial lambs: we are to feast on the Lamb of God...

But Jesus didn't stop there. Dare I say it wasn't enough in the Lord's eyes? Not only did He give His body and blood to be consumed at that table, he also gave another example for us to follow, the example of service to others. *Off* with the outer clothing, *on* with a towel around His waist, *down* on His knees before the very people He called His students—His *disciples*—to do for them what any household servant would do: wash and refresh their feet. Peter was confused: I know I would have been...

God's ways clearly are *not* ours. Giving His Son's life for us was an example of extreme love: it was over the top, the type never seen before! But in case anyone missed the point, the example of servanthood was something *everyone* was to follow. The first should be last. Those who would be great should serve and wash the feet of all. High status among Christians should have—as its only purpose—the goal of building up others and of glorifying God through constant and dedicated servanthood. The higher the individual, the more he/she should be concerned with the well-being of others. It's taken a lifetime of ministry on my part, and I think I'm just beginning to understand—just *beginning*. God's ways are not ours.

Tonight we remember what was, and why. Everything we do in our liturgy is rooted in Holy Scripture. We re-enact the rituals so that we might *experience* something of God, Who is very present here with us...

Beloved, tonight *we are re-living the beginning of our salvation!*

Think of it! Close your eyes if it will help. We are sitting at the end of the altar which is a vast table extending mystically through the east wall and beyond, through time and space... Jesus is the Host of the meal. That's why we call the sacramental bread, the host... Closest to Jesus are the saints triumphant. They're the people from every generation who have gone on before, whose robes have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb...² You and I are with the saints militant. We're a little further back, because our fight to bring the kingdom to earth hasn't finished yet. In this world there is still work for us to do...

But closer or farther, we can see Jesus clearly, His face shining. We can hear His voice, and when we do, *nothing else matters*... He turns and looks at you. Can you feel His love? Let it pour over you... Know that as He looks at you your sins are forgiven. Hear Him say that He has given His body for *you*... *Be assured* that in His eyes, you are worth it.

And as you experience the love of Jesus washing over you, remember His commandment to love others as He loves you. You are to honour Jesus by loving those He loves. You are to serve them with the same devotion Jesus paid to you. You are to forgive, because you have been forgiven.

Sometimes it is good to indulge in holy imagination. Perhaps you've done this before, and it affords us the opportunity of shutting out the distractions of the world around us, so that we can actually concentrate on Jesus as we should. As we re-enact the events of this historic night in that upper room, let us see with eyes of love and hear with hearts that yearn for our Lord.

We know what *was* (the Last Supper); what *is* (our celebration and re-enactment here and now); what *is to be* (the horror of the crucifixion); and what *is coming* (the glory of the Resurrection).

² Cf Rev. 7:14