**Thursday in Holy Week 2021**

**Collect :** Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Reading: 1 Cor 11, 23-26**

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Psalm 116, vs 9-end**

9    I believed that I should perish for I was sorely troubled;  ♦

and I said in my alarm, ‘Everyone is a liar.’

10  How shall I repay the Lord  ♦

for all the benefits he has given to me?

11  I will lift up the cup of salvation  ♦

and call upon the name of the Lord.

12  I will fulfil my vows to the Lord  ♦

in the presence of all his people. [R]

13  Precious in the sight of the Lord  ♦

is the death of his faithful servants.

14  O Lord, I am your servant,  ♦ your servant, the child of your handmaid;

you have freed me from my bonds.

15  I will offer to you a sacrifice of thanksgiving  ♦

and call upon the name of the Lord.

16  I will fulfil my vows to the Lord  ♦

in the presence of all his people,

17  In the courts of the house of the Lord,  ♦

in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Alleluia.

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**

**As it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.**

*Hymn: Were you there? (NEH 93)*

**1 Were you there when they crucified my Lord?   
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?   
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.   
Were you there when they crucified my Lord?**

**2 Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?   
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?   
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.   
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?**

**3 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?   
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?   
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.   
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?**

**4 Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?   
Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?   
Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.   
Were you there when God raised him from the tomb?**

**Gospel (John 13, 1-17, 31-35)**

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them…

When Judas had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**Thanks be to God**.

**Address**

On this Holy Thursday, or Maundy Thursday as it is known in the West, there are two actions of our Lord that are normally celebrated in the liturgies of the day. They focus on two verbs; ‘Do’ and ‘give’.

To ponder these two verbs today we have to remember a basic distinction between the gospels. On the one hand there are the gospel of Matthew, Mark and Luke. These we call the ‘synoptic’ gospels because the lense through which the life of Jesus is viewed and thus presented by the three ‘writers’ has more similarities than differences. How one is dependent on the other is too big a subject to touch on here.

These three gospels are different in style, order, presentation, and to a large extent theological assumptions to the Fourth Gospel, that of John. For today’s purposes we are looking to the Synoptic tradition to reflect on the verb ‘do’, and to the Fourth Gospel to reflect on the verb ‘give’.

The Synoptics record on this day, in the Great or Holy Week, the action of Jesus, in the company of his disciples, at what we refer to in ‘short-hand’ as the Last Supper. This recorded event is something of a pivotal point. Of course it is pivotal in the life of Our Lord, as it is from this Supper that he moves to the Garden of Gethsemane where he is arrested.

It is pivotal also in that it is the cross-roads of the inherited Jewish traditions of Jesus and his followers, and the future Christian traditions of Jesus and his followers. At the Supper both he and all his followers are Jewish. When we celebrate the Eucharist on account of the Last Supper, we are all Christian. In the line-up of ‘key moments’, this surely has to rank as pre-eminent.

The reason is that the Synoptic tradition follows a time-table that sets this Supper very squarely at the heart of the Jewish Passover meal. We don’t need to rehearse the details of Jesus being in Jerusalem during all of this particular week because it was Passover Week etc.

For the Synoptic gospel tradition we simply have to understand that the context is the Passover meal. At this meal, where the normal rituals would take place as set down in the tradition, Jesus takes bread, offers it for God's’ blessing, shares it, and says ‘Do’. In fact he says, ‘Do this in memory of me’. He then takes a cup of wine, which would have been on the table for the cup of blessing, and shares it and says ‘Do, this in remembrance of me’.

To strip away so much of what else could be said, these words lie at the heart of the Christian Eucharist. We repeat them at every celebration, indeed we could say they lie at the ‘core’ of every celebration. We refer to them technically as ‘the Dominical words’. These words, we know for sure, are part of the most ancient ‘package’ of genuine words of Jesus. This is a bold statement I have made, but I do so with conviction and with confidence.

I can do this because of St. Paul. When he writes his letters to the church of ‘next door’ Corinth in the year 53AD he refers to these very words of Jesus, saying that these words had been handed on to him. They are words that were most likely already being used in the Christian community in Corinth when they gathered on the Lord’s day, so that he could emphasize to the naughty Corinthians words that were already familiar to them.

What we need to remember is that Paul’s correspondence to the Corinthian Christians pre-dates the first gospel, that of St. Mark, by almost 20 years. This fact should not be underestimated. Read again the first scripture reading prescribed for today.

Jesus says at the ‘Synoptic tradition’ Passover meal that Jesus took bread and wine, and he instructed us to ‘do’ this to remember him. So this is what our practice has been ever since, making this primary ‘action’ or ‘doing’ of the church an ancient ‘authentic’ practice that cannot be divorced from any proclamation of the gospel, nor divorced from the ‘authentic’ sign of the church. To proclaim the Good News is to proclaim the Church, because we ‘do’ this to remember Him.

The second verb, ‘give’, comes to us today from the Johannine tradition, the Fourth Gospel. At the point where the Synoptics hand to us the familiar ‘Dominical words’, St. John inform us that when they are gather for the meal Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. He then says, ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another’. Here is the verb ‘give’.

It must therefore be a hallmark of Christ’s Church that it is a community held together, founded on, and active in, showing love for one another, and love for God’s world. It is this insightful and divine gift that Jesus vouchsafes to us on this day, in the Johannine tradition. It is this ‘giving’ that names this day in English ‘Maundy’ – it is from the Latin root ***Mandatum.***

This gift of love to the church is a sign of the new covenant with God, a gift that is not in any sense lost on St. Paul. In the same letter to the Corinthians Paul offers us his sublime paean of divine love that has to be ‘imaged’ by us – Now there are three things, faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love. **(1 Cor 13).**

So today we are bidden to reflect on two verbs – ‘do’ and ‘give’. In so many ways they anticipate Christ’s offering of himself on Holy Friday.

**Time of silent stillness**

**Blessing:**

Christ crucified draw you to himself, to find in him a sure ground for faith, a firm support for hope, and the assurance of sins forgiven: and the blessing….