

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2015
SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
I CORINTHIANS 11.23 JOHN 13.1



"WHO EXACTLY ARE YOU...?"...REFERRING TO THE CHURCH, A NOT UNCOMMON QUESTION...BEFORE I COULD ANSWER THIS TIME CAME THE RHETORICAL AFTERWORD..." YOU 'CATHOLIC TYPE PEOPLE' SEEM ALWAYS OBSESSED WITH THE DEATH OF JESUS...

WELL NO...ACTUALLY OPPOSITE...ABOUT THE LIFE OF JESUS, OUR OWN AND YOURS, SAID I...THE DISCUSSION BECAME FAR RANGING...

DO THIS UNTIL I GET BACK...NOT BY ANY STRETCH OF THEIR IMAGINATION COULD THE TWELVE HAVE PREDICTED THIS SURPRISE CONCLUSION TO THE PASSOVER MEAL

Because Christianity cannot be understood except in the face of Judaism, this year we concentrated our Lenten Study with compelling attention to Passover,,,the event that brought Jesus and his disciples to Jerusalem. Doubtless reeling from an already confusing Passover week, we readily imagine them looking at one another in wonder..."What next" they must surely have thought...

We see it in the Passover Meal today...the Seder...where it is ordered that the youngest will ask "Why are we celebrating this night?" and the elder will pass on the reason: God's passing over the homes of our forebears, delivering them at the Red Sea, giving them the Promised Land. The elder passes on the heritage, passes on the tradition, passes on the story, and so enlists a new generation.

We see it in the way Jesus invited all sorts and conditions of people into his fellowship, talked with any who had ears to hear, ate with them, made a place for them against the protocols of proper behavior of his day.

We see it when St Paul teaches about the Holy Eucharist, saying "I pass on to you that which was passed on to me"—how he took bread, broke it, gave thanks, and gave it to them saying "This is my body" and after supper took the cup...gave it to them saying this is my blood of the new covenant...do this in remembrance of me

Neither predicted by anyone nor disclosed in advance were the events of that...the night

that hinges the Old and New Covenant...Old Deal/New Deal...the Old and New Testament

Today is the day of Mandate...from the Latin, *mandatum*, we get the word Maundy...hence Maundy Thursday...day of mandate ...**commandment...**

Jesus gave instructions that have been followed throughout Christendom for a hundred thousand weeks since...that mandate...commandment...is what brings us to this very place this very moment!

That part of the evening ended and Jesus began what St John relates...to show them how they should treat each another, as SERVANTS of each other and of others. He meant what he said and so there would be no doubt he washed their feet.

When finished they sat down for a final conference...Jesus told them "I will not be here much longer." Then he concluded..."I have one final thing to tell you...this is a new order...it is simply that you LOVE one another." It was simple and straight forward He put no conditions around that commandment...therefore we have no right to be so presumptuous as to water it down and consider it conditionally applicable.

A new dimension of Love was instilled for the Twelve...how long it took them to actually get the message and put it into consistent practice is unclear...it is clear that we need to do just what they were told...be the servants of Jesus and the servants of each other and of those whom we do not yet know.

When all was concluded Jesus said...now come and spend an hour praying with me.

On this night with great joy and thanksgiving we take a momentary respite from the rigors of Holy Week to act upon the commandments of Jesus

- Acting on the commandment about his Body and Blood
- Committing to unconditional love WE are called to practice...

And our 'personal Maundy', our serious personal mandate...

As the elder is called to do at the Seder...**Read, Mark Learn, Digest and Tell of what Jesus commanded...and so enlist a new generation...DO THIS.**

