

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2016
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH
FATHER JOHN ALTBERG
I CORINTHIANS 11.23 JOHN 13.1



"WHAT EXACTLY IS THIS HOLY WEEK STUFF ALL ABOUT...? A FREQUENT QUESTION FROM A CURIOUS, NON-PARTICIPATING ACQUAINTANCE. BEFORE I COULD ANSWER CAME THE RHETORICAL AFTERWORD..." YOU 'CATHOLIC KIND OF PEOPLE' SEEM OBSESSED WITH GOING TO CHURCH AND THE DEATH OF JESUS...

WELL NO...ACTUALLY OPPOSITE...ABOUT THE LIFE OF JESUS, OUR OWN AND YOURS, SAID I...THE DISCUSSION WAS FAR RANGING...AROUND TODAY – THE MAUNDY – MANDATE...

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

Re-emphasizing what we talked about Sunday, Christianity makes utterly no sense except in the face of Judaism, Holy Week compels attention to Passover...the event that brought Jesus and friends to Jerusalem. Doubtless reeling from an already confusing Passover week, we readily imagine them looking at one another wondering..."What next"

Their – and our – answer lies in the Passover Meal...the Seder...where it is ordered that the youngest will ask "Why are we celebrating this night?" Listen carefully...the elder passes 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 again as St Paul teaches about the Holy Eucharist, saying "I pass on to you that which was passed on to me"—how Jesus 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."

Today is the day of Mandate...from the Latin, *mandatum*, we get the word Maundy...hence Maundy Thursday...day of mandate...**commandment...not option...**

Jesus gave instructions that have been followed as Dom Gregory Dix eloquently describes "Throughout Christendom for a hundred thousand weeks since"...that mandate now brings us together now!

As that portion of the evening evening ended Jesus began that which 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...for ALL is about life...**

