

Maundy Thursday 2021
Homily – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

1 Corinthians 11.23-26 St. John 13.1-15



HE HAD ALWAYS LOVED THOSE IN THE WORLD THAT WERE HIS OWN, AND HE LOVED THEM TO THE VERY END. HE LOVES US, AND TO MAKE CERTAIN WE KNOW HOW MUCH HE LOVES US...HE GAVE US NEW COMMAND...DO THIS...UNTIL HE GETS BACK!

Tonight we continue our Holy Week journey filled with stark contrasts. Maundy Thursday is the major turning point in Holy Week. We begin on a high note...the Celebrant wears white vestments...the color of joy and life. The *Gloria in excelsis* not heard since the last Sunday after Epiphany is said. Our mood is happy!

The word *Maundy* is derived from the Latin *mandatum...mandate or command*. Tonight Jesus gives us a *New Commandment*. Jesus tells us if we truly love him we will want to keep his commandments. Jesus gives us a *New Commandment* to love others just as much as he loves us. There is no opt-out clause.

Jesus teaches us what his *New Commandment* is all about at the Last Supper. He first does something totally unexpected...he washes his disciples feet. Peter objects because Jesus is his Lord and Master. His disciples should be washing his feet, not the other way around. Jesus tells Peter he can't really be his disciple unless he follows his example...Jesus came to serve...by showing what it really means to love another person. Washing another person's feet was a profound act of humility.

The commandment Jesus gives us to love each other is unconditional. If we take Jesus seriously, we may not place any restrictions on whom we choose to love...and we can't keep the love Jesus has for us to ourselves...it must be shared...and Jesus wants us to act with the same humility he shows toward us. Jesus tells us... *DO THIS...UNTIL HE GETS BACK!*

There is a second part to Jesus "Love Commandment". Saint Paul writes about it in tonight's Epistle reading. He tells us he isn't making things up when he says his teaching comes directly from the Lord...Jesus took Bread and gave thanks and 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...and Jesus tells us **DO THIS** as often as we gather together...until he gets back".

Jesus is the Lamb of God of our Passover Feast and through the shedding of his blood...he is our "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world"...once and for all...for all time...an action which can never be repeated.

The Maundy Thursday Liturgy anticipates the events we will commemorate on Good Friday. Tonight, after we receive Holy Communion, the Blessed Sacrament will be carried in Solemn Procession to the Altar of Repose...our representation of the Garden of Gethsemane...the place Jesus would pray for the strength to endure what he knew was about to happen.

When we return to the Sanctuary...the Tabernacle is empty...its door left open. We strip the High Altar bare and remove all of the candles. The High Altar is then washed...symbolically making it clean and ready to receive, Jesus, the Lamb of God, at his grave. Our mood is now more somber.

The stark contrast of Maundy Thursday is apparent as we turn all of the lights out in the church and leave in darkness...Good Friday will have darkness...but the darkness will not continue...the light that shines through the darkness can never be extinguished...there is hope.

Tonight we thank Jesus for the giving us his Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar...and renew our commitment to keeping his *New Commandment* to love others as much as he loves us. We will join other Catholic Christians throughout the world and and...

...DO THIS UNTIL HE GETS BACK!

