

# Maundy Thursday 2023

## Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

### Father Craig Looney

*I Corinthians 11.23-26 St. John 13.1-15*



**DO THIS...UNTIL I COME BACK!**

Maundy Thursday is a night of stark contrasts. We began in light...we will end in darkness. There is a dramatic shift in tonight's Liturgy from celebration to uncertainty...the continuation of the Divine Reversal...the preparation for what's next...Good Friday.

We began tonight's Liturgy saying the *Gloria in excelsis*...not heard since the Last Sunday after the Epiphany. The Divine Reversal began the moment Jesus was conceived. The angels announced his birth to shepherds..."Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased."

Tonight the celebrant wears white vestments... another celebratory element of the Liturgy. After we receive Holy Communion things change...we sing the solemn hymn *Now, my tongue, the mystery telling*...we place the Blessed Sacrament on the Altar of Repose...our visual representation of the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus waits...we wait...for what happens next.

The word *Maundy* comes from the Latin *mandatum*...the day of the *mandate*...the day of commandments. Commandments are what we must do...we can't opt out. In John's Gospel Jesus tells us if we love him we will keep his commandments.

Tonight Jesus gives us two sets of instructions...two related but distinct commandments. First he took bread and wine and blessed them and said...

..."*This is my body, broken for you*"..."*This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you...do this as often as you get together...until I come back*".

What we receive here tonight is the Body and Blood of Jesus. These are no mere symbols.... Saint Paul reinforces the reason we are here tonight and why we celebrate the Mass every Sunday in his teaching about the Holy Eucharist...

..."*I have received from the Lord what I am passing on to you...how Jesus took bread, broke it, gave thanks, and said, 'This is my body', and after supper took the cup and said, 'This is my blood.'* Every time we eat this bread and drink from this cup we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Second, the Gospel tells us when supper was over Jesus got up from the table and began to wash the Disciples feet. Jesus is the host at the Last Supper. Hosts aren't supposed to wash their guests feet...the guest were supposed to do that them selves...or perhaps one of the host's servants washed their feet

When it comes time for Jesus to wash Peter's feet he objects. Jesus says,

..."*if you don't let me wash your feet...you can't be my disciple. I'm doing this so you will all know what it really means to follow me. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.*"

Peter then suggests Jesus not stop with a foot washing...why not give him a bath. "Enough", Jesus said to Peter.

Jesus said he didn't come to be waited on...he came to serve. The Christian Life is a life of service to others. Jesus shows his unconditional love for his disciples and for us by washing their feet. If we love Jesus, we must follow his commandments and love others just as much as he loves us.

Maundy Thursday is a night of two mandates...commandments...

...to take the Bread and Wine become his Body and Blood and proclaim his death until he comes back

...to love one another as he has loved us...unconditionally...in thought, word and action

The Divine Reversal continues. We are here tonight because Jesus tells us...

**DO THIS...UNTIL I COME BACK!**

