

## Maundy Thursday

Prayers, Readings, Reflection and Song.

“Of all the privations and restrictions that we have been asked to observe in recent weeks – they will never come into sharper focus (in a worshipping context) than they will on Maundy Thursday. Tonight we were meant to be gathering together, sharing bread and the cup of Christ, and washing one another’s feet. Those simple actions – gathering, sharing and washing – seem almost alien to us now. But even though we cannot do these things together – we can still remember.

Indeed, we must remember. Tonight we will be looking at the cherished photograph of a loved one far from home. We cannot reach out and touch them, but we cherish the memory in the sure and certain knowledge that we will meet with them again. Soon.

What follows is a set of words, prayers and reflections, that can guide us through the evening of Maundy Thursday, and deepen our journey with Christ in this most Holy of Weeks.”



*Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you, before you and within you.*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you  
**All and also with you.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ says: 'If you love me, keep my commandments.' 'Unless I wash you, you have no part in me.'

Let us confess to almighty God our sins against his love, and ask him to cleanse us.

Have mercy on us, O God, in your great goodness; according to the abundance of your compassion blot out our offences.

Lord have mercy  
**All Lord have mercy**

Against you only have we sinned and done what is evil in your sight.

Christ have mercy  
**All Christ have mercy**

Purge us from our sin and we shall be clean; wash us and we shall be whiter than snow.

Lord have mercy  
**All Lord have mercy**

May the Father forgive us by the death of his Son and strengthen us to live in the power of the Spirit all our days.

**All Amen**

### *The Collect for the day*

Let us pray that we may love one another as Christ has loved us.

God our Father, you have invited us to share in the supper which your Son gave to his Church to proclaim his death until he comes:

may he nourish us by his presence, and unite us in his love; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever

*All* **Amen.**

## **THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

### *The first reading, Exodus 12:1-14*

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: <sup>2</sup>This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. <sup>4</sup>If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbour in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. <sup>5</sup>Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. <sup>6</sup>You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. <sup>7</sup>They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. <sup>8</sup>They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>9</sup>Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. <sup>10</sup>You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. <sup>11</sup>This is how you shall eat it: your

loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. <sup>12</sup>For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgements: I am the LORD. <sup>13</sup>The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. <sup>14</sup>This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

This is the Word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

*The second reading, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

Beloved: 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, <sup>24</sup>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.' <sup>25</sup>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.' <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

This is the Word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

*The Gospel, John 13:1-17 and 31b -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. <sup>2</sup>The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper <sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from

God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup>got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' <sup>7</sup>Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' <sup>8</sup>Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' <sup>9</sup>Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' <sup>10</sup>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.' <sup>11</sup>For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.' <sup>12</sup>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?' <sup>13</sup>You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup>So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. <sup>31</sup>When he had gone out, Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup>If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup>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." <sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

*All sing*    **Praise to you O Christ.**

## *Reflection*

Washing the feet and sharing the meal.

Tonight we make a remembrance of these two seminal acts of Jesus. On one night in Jerusalem, in one room, around one table, with 12 friends, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and then shared a meal of broken bread and a cup of wine.

Whilst Matthew, Mark and Luke give focus to the bread and wine, it is in John's Gospel that the spotlight is turned onto the washing of the feet. Both are deeply important actions, treated with different sympathies by each of the four gospel writers.

And yet they stand side by side. Imagine the scene. The disciples huddled together in an upper room, in a City that is not their own, as darkness falls, the streets thronged with worshipping tourists from rural Judea. The Roman soldiers and the temple police scouring every street corner for renegades and insurrectionists. The events of the preceding days – the triumphal entry, the brouhaha in the temple, the plotting from the religious authorities – all this still ringing in the disciples ears. On top of all the excitement of that week, their friend and leader, Jesus, was now openly discussing his impending arrest and execution. As they gathered in that room, safe for the time-being from the danger on the streets, their adrenaline must have been pumping. And what does Jesus do? He takes some bread and wine, a bowl of water and a towel.

When we are stressed or even in shock (and Lord knows there enough of that in the world right now) – we actually have to make a conscious effort to take care of ourselves and calm ourselves down. “Have a banana” – that's what my wife always says to me. When I've had back-to-back meetings and pastoral visits, and cycled home dodging lorries in the pouring rain, and I fall through the door: “have a banana”. What she is really saying is, ‘take a moment; disrupt your stress, chew and don't speak, calm down, get some calories in you – and then we can talk.’ It is immensely sensible advice.

And what does Jesus do? He gathers his friends, takes his time, makes preparations, and even pauses to wash the feet of each disciple. Just because we are stressed doesn't mean we stop caring for ourselves. We matter. Care for yourselves. Value yourselves. Love yourselves. Let Jesus love you – even when you think the sky is about to crash down around your ears.

Sometimes it is the last thing we want to do. We don't want to calm down. We don't want distraction. We just want to get on with job in hand. Come on. Time is short. Stop dawdling! No, says Jesus, we must act against that manic instinct – we must slow down. Slow down enough to notice what is going on – inside us and around us. Slow down to get perspective. Slow down to find some peace.

I always admire the footballers who, before a big match, when they are all fired up and ready to go, take the time to stand arm in arm for a minute's silence. It must take an act of great strength to summon the patience to hold back the energy bubbling up inside.

There is a wonderful play called 'Someone who'll watch over me' by Frank McGuinness. It tells the story of 3 hostages – An Englishman, Irishman and American – held in cell in Beirut. By the end of the play only the Englishman and Irishman are left. Then the call comes for the Irishman to leave the cell, leaving only the Englishman behind. Where his companion is going – to death or freedom - neither of them know, but at their final parting (strung in the balance between insanity and despair) the Englishman produces a pocket comb. He takes it and silently brushes the hair of his cellmate, who then silently takes the comb and returns the gesture. The spontaneous ritual over, they part ways, and then nothing more is said, but only a gunshot is heard in the distance.

In the face of the sheer heartbreak and terror of that moment, the only thing available to them was their deepest humanity, a humanity expressed with the brushing of a comb.

Washing the feet and sharing the meal.

Of course these are ritual acts suffused with layer upon layer of meaning. The servanthood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The allegory of the Kingdom of God, where the first are last and the last are first. The sacrifice of the Lamb. The blood of atonement. Layer after layer. Deeper and yet deeper still, we plunge the depths of the significance of these acts.

But we must not forget the sheer audacious simplicity of these acts as well. Eat and drink and wash. Look after yourselves. Let others look after you, too. Stop what you're doing and tend to your needs – your most basic needs – and maybe then you'll be just a little bit more ready to face whatever may come next.

Our theology, like poetry, can always yield more significance than the bare words at first suggest. That is the beauty of a faith that invites a lifetime of questions and exploration.

But when the Son of God expressed himself that night – when he fed and watered and washed his friends – it was (before it became anything else) a loving response to their most fundamental human requirements.

So, when we are eventually allowed to step back out into the world, to love our neighbour and let our faith be known – we can leave behind the convoluted doctrine and the layers of meaning. We can go out with bread and wine and water and a towel – roll up our sleeves and meet those basic human needs wherever they may be.

Amen

## The Washing of Feet

*During the washing of feet, this refrain is often sung.  
I encourage you to sing it now in peaceful meditation.*

### Ubi Caritas, et amor. Ubi Caritas, Deus ibi est

#### Ubi caritas

Where there is charity and love, God is to be found.

Jacques Berthier (1991)  
Chords: Kieron Power (2016)

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The melody is simple and homophonic, with lyrics written below the notes. Chords are indicated above the staff: F, C, Dm, Gm, and C. The second staff starts at measure 5 and continues the melody with lyrics and chords: F, C, Dm, Gm, C<sub>3</sub>, and F. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

U - bi ca - ri - tas et a - mor,  
Live in cha - ri - ty and stead - fast love.

u - bi ca - ri - tas De - us i - bi est.  
Live in cha - ri - ty; God will dwell with you.

**Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters we do also for you: give us the will to be the servant of others as you were the servant of all, and gave up your life and died for us, but are alive and reign, now and for ever.  
Amen**



*Intercessions.*

In the power of the Spirit let us pray to the Father through Christ the saviour of the world.

Father, on this, the night he was betrayed, your Son Jesus Christ washed his disciples' feet. We commit ourselves to follow his example of love and service.

Lord, hear us

*All* **and humble us.**

On this night, he prayed for his disciples to be one. We pray for the unity of your Church.

Lord, hear us

*All* **and unite us.**

On this night, he prayed for those who were to believe through his disciples' message. We pray for the mission of your Church.

Lord, hear us

*All* **and renew our zeal.**

On this night, he commanded his disciples to love, but suffered rejection himself. We pray for the rejected and unloved.

Lord, hear us

*All* **and fill us with your love.**

On this night, he reminded his disciples that if the world hated them it hated him first. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith.

Lord, hear us

*All* **and give us your peace.**

On this night, he accepted the cup of death and looked forward to the new wine of the kingdom. We remember those who have died in the peace of Christ.

Lord, hear us

*All* **and welcome all your children into paradise.**

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us  
*All* **Our Father who art in heaven,**  
**hallowed be thy name,**  
**thy kingdom come,**  
**thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**  
**Give us this day our daily bread;**  
**and forgive us our trespasses**  
**as we forgive those who trespass against us.**  
**And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from**  
**evil.**  
**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory**  
**For ever and ever. Amen.**

When the disciples had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus prayed to the Father “If it is possible take this cup of suffering from me.” He said to his disciples “How is it that you were not able to keep watch with me for one hour? The hour has come for the son of Man to be handed over to the power of sinners.”

*We sing:*

**Stay with me, remain here with me;**  
**Watch and pray; watch and pray**

Chords: Dm, Gm<sup>6</sup>, Dm, Gm<sup>6</sup>, Dm, C

Lyrics: Stay with me, re-main here with me; watch and

Chords: F, C, Dm, Asus, A

Lyrics: pray, watch and pray.

*Repeat as desired*