**Readings and Reflection Maundy Thursday 9 April 2020**

**First Reading** Exodus 12:1-8. 11-14.

The Lord gives to Moses instructions regarding the Passover, and how the Israelites are to ward off the angel of death.

**Psalm 116**

How can I repay the lord for his goodness to me?

**Second Reading** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Paul relates a very early account of Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper, which he himself had received.

**Gospel** John 13:1-15.

Jesus washes the feet of his disciples, thus giving them an example of how a leader should be the servant of others.

**Reflection**

Those of you who used the Service at Home on Monday will recall how the week began with a meal during which Jesus’ feet were washed and anointed. Tonight another meal and another foot washing. But this time it is the Lord who is the host and the one who washes feet. Foot washing was to be expected but it was usually done by a slave or servant as the guests arrived. Here it is done at the table.

Normally a slave would wash feet, but Jesus does not wash feet as a slave but rather in a position of strength and in perfect freedom, in just the same manner as he will give up his life.

St John tells us that Jesus loved his disciples. St John also says that Jesus loved them “to the end”. This can mean to the full, as in the jars filled to the brim with wine at that other feast at Cana. Or, it could have the sense of completion, as when after a journey you finally reach your destination. The very word that can mean limit implies that this love is without limit. It can also mean until his death. And so it is the prelude to what he will accomplish on the cross. So by washing feet, Jesus shows us the measure of how we are to love, of how we are to live now. And so he gives the Command that his followers should love one another.

We will only understand this rightly if we keep in mind that the command to love is given during Jesus’ institution of the Eucharist. For we will only be able to fulfil that command in the strength of the sacrament of the Lord’s Body and Blood. And even though at this time this year we are unable to receive Holy Communion physically, we can be assured that God will give us the grace of the sacrament if we earnestly desire to receive it. That grace assures us that we are members of one Body and as such called to minister to each other bodily.

So where will the washing of feet take place this year? Well, in so many ways where it takes place every year. But surely this year, in homes between family members, and in the spaces between homes where groceries are left on door steps, on the internet and over the phone where people support and sustain each other. In hospitals and in care homes, in the staff and, also in the patients. This unnamed but very real foot washing is indeed very advanced and widespread. You will see it in supermarkets and on open spaces where most people keep their distance, not primarily out of fear of contagion, but out of the proper exercise of love. “I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you”.

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