

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Collects

O God, in the fullness of time you revealed your love in Jesus the Lord. On the eve of his death, as a sign of your covenant, he washed the feet of his disciples and gave himself as food and drink. Give us life at this sacred banquet and joy in humble service, that bound to Christ in all things, we may pass over from this world to your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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 forever. **Amen.**

Christ, whose feet were caressed with perfume and women's hair; you humbly took basin and towel and washed the feet of your friends. Wash us also in your tenderness as we touch one another: that embracing your service freely, we may accept no other bondage in your name. **Amen.**

John 13 v1-17 & 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. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. 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. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' 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.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'

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? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

'Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. 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." I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Maundy Thursday MEDITATION

We rejoice that we have four Gospels, and not just one, or that someone felt it necessary to combine or harmonise the four accounts into one. For each Gospel writer inspires us with his picture and understanding of Jesus, and each articulates different theological challenges and questions for us to wrestle with and come into our own relationship with Christ. People are perhaps surprised at the different episodes and flavours that are included in the different Gospels. Perhaps the best known variation is in the Christmas stories; none in Mark, wisemen and a flight into Egypt in Matthew, shepherds and a journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in Luke, and in John wonderful poetry and philosophy on Word and Light. In the Holy Week and Easter narrative there is much that all four Gospel writers include, but there are also significant variations. I have written before at this time of year of the differing traditions of Jesus' words from the Cross and we may return to them for Good Friday.

Perhaps the most astonishing variance is that whilst Matthew, Mark and Luke (and Paul in 1 Corinthians) all give similar accounts of what Jesus did at the Last Supper which became the foundation for the Church's worship in Communion (Eucharist, Lord's Supper or Mass), John is so, so different.

John has given over a whole chapter to how Jesus is the Bread of Life, and equally a good deal of space to the image of Jesus as the True Vine, so clearly he also knows of the significance of bread and wine in the Church's life, but he does not link it to the events of the Last Supper. For John, the Last Supper is held before the day before the Passover meal is celebrated, whilst for the others it is a Passover meal. This means that the chronology in John is that Jesus dies on the day before the Passover, the day on which the lambs were sacrificed to be eaten the following day. In the foundational Passover story, the Hebrews in Egypt are commanded to place fresh lamb's blood on their doorposts as a sign that the "Angel of Death" "pass-by" in the slaughter of the first-born, whereas the Egyptian first-born, from Pharaoh's own son and heir through to the animals in the fields, die. This then creates the opportunity and moment to flee their slavery and depart via the wilderness into the promised land flowing with milk and honey. So just with Bread of Life and True Vine, this gives the evangelist, John, the chance to illustrate that Jesus is the ***Lamb of God***. You may recall that this is the title John the Baptist calls Jesus right at the commencement of his public ministry at the River Jordan; the river that is the frontier of that promised land. John proclaims that the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. This is one

of the meanings, or consequences, of the cross. The perfect and innocent lamb is offered as a sacrifice for the redemption of the world, and his blood is shed to protect his people and mark them out as his own. After Jesus has died on the cross, John, alone of the evangelists, records that he is pierced with a lance and that water and blood flow from his broken body. This is not as a medical postmortem, but as theological pointer to baptism and eucharist as integral in the life of the body of Christ, the Church.

John has Jesus saying much to his disciples at his Last Supper, but the climax focuses on Jesus washing the disciples' feet. This too has many layers and depth, so I shall touch only on some of the significance. There are other occasions recorded when Jesus is washed, feet or head, with perfume or water, and by unexpected people; loose women. Here John has Jesus taking the part not so much as the host, but as the host's slave. It is hospitable to refresh guests by washing their feet. Many religious traditions take off footwear before worship and some have washing of feet as a prelude. Moses is told to take off his shoes when he encounters God and is on Holy Ground. Jesus, in washing feet, is not only giving an example of servant behaviour, but also in his actions, showing that he is choosing to be identified as a slave.

Jesus came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' 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.'

Peter, as is so often the case in the gospels, misunderstands and overreacts. First, he does not want to be served, then he wants to be immersed from head to toe! Jesus is patient with Peter's misunderstandings and reminds us that we can only understand the events of the Last Supper in the light of the whole Easter events. If we read this in a baptismal light, then it is saying that baptism by total immersion rather than pouring or sprinkling is showing off, that it is through baptism that we become "in Christ" and "members together of the Body of Christ", and that baptism does not take away our responsibility for our actions and we can still let Jesus down.

Our Gospel account today ends with Jesus' Mandate; his manifesto, his undergirding principle, his foundational value; and it is this Mandate that gives the title Maundy to this Thursday; *'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one*

another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Maundy Thursday PRAYERS

Father, on 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, and humble us.

On that night, he prayed for his disciples to be one.
We pray for the unity of your church..... Lord hear us, and unite us.

On that night, he prayed for those who were to believe through his message.
We pray for the mission of his church.....Lord hear us, and renew our zeal.

On that night, he commanded them to love, but suffered rejection himself.
We pray for the rejected and unloved.....
Lord hear us, and fill us with your love.

On that night, he reminded them that if the world hated them it hated them first. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith.....
Lord hear us, and give us your peace.

On that night, as we remember his commands, we bring our own particular prayers..... Lord hear us, and humble us.

Lord, you are always breaking apart our communities, our identities, our image of you: open our hand and heart to receive the uncalled-for gift, fractured food, a feast where untouchables meet, human and divine: through Jesus Christ, the passion of God. Amen.

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HOLY WEEK SERVICES

Wednesday 1st April
7pm Taize Service at St Peter's

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2nd April

7pm at St Peter's;

Communion of Last Supper with Footwashing and Vigil

GOOD FRIDAY 3rd April

10am St Peter's

12 Noon Churches Together in Broad St

1-3pm Messy Church at St John's

1pm zoom service – contact Rev Jenny

2pm St Mary's

7pm St John's

HOLY SATURDAY 4th April

7pm St John's

Ceremonies and First Communion

Easter Sunday 5th April

Services at usual times

*Next Sunday, April 5th, **EASTER SUNDAY**
Colossians 3 v1-4, Matthew 28 v1-10.*

This Thursday 2nd Apr 10am-3pm
Easter Egg Hunt & Craft Fair at St John's

