

Thursday 2nd April 2026

Maundy Thursday

Gospel Reading

John 13:1-17

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

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.

31-35

The New Commandment

When he had gone out, Jesus said, '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.'

Other Readings: Exodus 12:1-4 (5-10) 11-14

Psalms 116.1,10-17

1 Corinthians 11.23-26

Homily

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

On 12th April, 2001, the Late Queen, Queen Elizabeth II, presented the Royal Maundy money in our cathedral church in Lincoln. The commemorative coins went to seventy-five pensioner men and seventy-five pensioner women, one specially minted coin for each of her then years of life. As long ago as 1662, in the reign of Charles II, especially minted silver coins were first produced for distribution to the elderly and poor. However, public and royal charitable works on Maundy Thursday date back even earlier to 1213 in the reign of King John. That was a remarkable 800+ years ago!

Why all this fuss and why has the tradition of royal and also public charitable works lasted so long? The Late William Barclay wrote a beautiful interpretation of our Gospel. He reminds us that the Luke Gospel account includes the suggestion that on that day the disciples were quarrelling about precedence – which one was more important than the next one. They were doing this even in sight of the imminence of the cross – the coming Good Friday. So, both Luke and John report that Jesus had a very dramatic way of demonstrating to the disciples the right and proper manner in which relations between people in a group of believers should be conducted. This may have prompted Jesus to adopt the role of the lowest servant in the great houses and wash the feet of the entire company. Barclay explained that the roads in Summer were inches deep in dust and those same roads allowed feet to be also inches deep in mud in the Winter. This time it was in mud. Sandals were the usual footwear so the feet of travellers were always in need of bathing when they arrived at their destination. That evening, perhaps after the dispute about who was more important, maybe no one wanted to take on the lowly task of performing this service. Jesus mended the matter in the most vivid way possible: He washed everyone's feet Himself. Jesus said to the disciples: "You see what I have done. You call me master and your Lord and you are quite right; for so I am; and yet I am prepared to do this for you. 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." Later that evening, Jesus gave those present and also us today, His new commandment, that we should love one another as He has loved us. His context that evening, for the new commandment was that of the humble washing of the feet of His followers. Acts of service became royal that evening.

We ought to think. Many times, trouble arises because someone doesn't know his place. Even in churches, sometimes ecclesiastical dignitaries are offended because they did not receive the precedence to which their office entitled them. Outside of church life and in our places of work and in our families, do we ever forget the example of Our Lord and Saviour and sit on our dignity rather than taking up the lowest place?

There is more to the story here than the lesson in humility that Jesus taught. In the conversation between Jesus and Simon Peter, it is Peter's personal pride that at first prevented him from submitting to Jesus' attempt to wash his feet. What may have been behind the exchange is the explanation that the foot washing marked entry into the household of faith. This made it vital. In the early church and still today, entry into the community of the faithful is characterised by the sacrament of baptism, complete with plenty of water! In our Gospel we can also see that Jesus was drawing a picture of the washing

through baptism which is the entry to the church and telling people that they must not be too proud to submit to it.

We move ever closer to the highest points of our Holy Week; the ignominy of Jesus' death on the cross; the silent wait of Holy Saturday, then Jesus' glorious rising from the dead, on Easter Day. **Amen**

Conversation Questions

1. Why did Jesus do this extraordinary thing of washing the feet of His disciples?
2. What makes these proceedings royal?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*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.*

(or)

*God our Father,
your Son Jesus Christ was obedient to the end
and drank the cup prepared for him:
may we who share his table
watch with him through the night of suffering
and be faithful.*

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