

Year A – Maundy Thursday – 13 April 2017  
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Beginning on Ash Wednesday and throughout all of Lent, I have been welcoming you as we walk this path toward Good Friday. I have asked you to dig deep, to enter into the darkness, to swallow your fear of what you do not know and trust that where we are going is indeed a place you are capable of going. And now I am asking you to trust me that not only are you capable of going here, but it is necessary as well that you do indeed go ...

This is not an easy night ... This is a night on which you are expected to allow me to wash your feet... This is not about being embarrassed. This is not about doing something uncomfortable. This is about entering into that night over two thousand years ago, when your world changed completely, even though you weren't around yet to understand that. This is a night that, if you will receive it, is one which will guide you further along a path on which only God can lead you. This is the path that leads to the cross, to the tomb, which will be sealed, and then, and only after the cross and the sealed tomb, will it lead to the empty tomb and the Risen Lord Jesus Christ who first had to wash the disciples' feet, pray and weep in the Garden alone, hang on the cross and be buried in that tomb.

This night begins three days of one liturgy. What we begin this evening will not end until Saturday night when we gather with the new flame, the new hope and the renewed Good News. But before we can get there, we must begin here. And so, once again, I welcome you and I invite you to live with me through these three days ...

What is this night about?

Maundy Thursday is the beginning of the end.

It is the beginning of everything being turned on its ear and nothing being as it seems.

This is the night that Jesus prepared the Passover Meal for those who would come to recognize that he was the Passover Lamb.

This is the night when the master would wash the servants' feet so that they might finally understand that they were called to serve all others, just as he did.

This is the night when Jesus gave to us the Supper we call the Last Supper, the Great Communion, the Holy Eucharist – not so that we might simply remember him when we partake but that we might indeed be filled with him, with his strength, his purpose, his very presence, each and every time we take the bread – his body – in our hands and each and every time we take the cup – his blood – between our lips.

This meal is not simply a symbol.

It is both a foretaste of what is to come in heaven and it is the strength we need to continue in this life as we prepare ourselves for heaven.

And finally, it is an opportunity for us to enter into that quiet Garden of Gethsemane, praying with Jesus as he asked his disciples to do, as he faced the depth of his own humanity, which is, of course, the fullness of our humanity as well.

This evening, and for the next three days, I invite you, on Jesus' behalf, to set aside your fears, your concerns, your nervousness ...

I invite you, on Jesus' behalf, to cancel other plans, to come into this place, to allow yourself the gift of participating in your salvation, as together we worship through this night, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil ...

I invite you to lay aside your pride, or your embarrassment, and remove your sock and allow me to serve you as I am called by Christ to serve, as a servant ... and allow yourself to enter, if just for a moment, into the space the disciples shared, as Jesus washed their feet in preparation for their final journey together...

I invite you to enter into the Eucharist and to hold the body of Christ in the palm of your hand, to allow the taste of his blood to remain on your tongue, received together from the common cup Jesus himself ordered us to share, and then allow your body to be healed with the very real presence of your Saviour within you ...

I invite you to look up and watch and feel as the sanctuary is bared, as we lament the Psalm, hearing "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me ..."

I invite you to stay in this place ... or to come back into this space through the night, ensuring that Jesus is never left alone as the long watches of the night pass by and the dawn of Good Friday approaches ...

And then I invite you to return and "be" – return to this place, kneel before the cross, acknowledge your sinfulness, your humanity, your deep and desperate need for Jesus' forgiveness and healing and comfort that is handed down to us from the cross even as Jesus is lifted up on to the cross ...

I invite you to go into the dark, to rest there, to listen, to hear the silence of God's sorrow even as we always know we will hear the rejoicing of the angels, when the right time comes ... but which is just not yet ....