

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

*The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 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."*

*In the same way, he took the cup after supper, saying "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

So writes St Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: 23- 26. It is likely that he is quoting from a liturgy used by the earliest Christians, drawing from the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke. We still use more or less the same words every Eucharist, and tonight marks the occasion when it all started, and we in our various isolated or locked down homes will not be sharing this mandate tonight, no matter how much we would want to. Yes, sharing Communion is part of the Mandate Jesus gave us that night, hence "Maundy", but tonight we cannot share in what is sometimes termed "our duty and our joy". But share it we will, one day, when we can, and what a Celebration that will be. For tonight though, all we can do is pray that the Lord Jesus will stay with us and close to us and enter our souls. Just because we can't meet around the Altar, does not mean we are out of business, even though business is, I have to say, unusual at the moment.

But Jesus also, according to John, did something which shocked his friends and disciples – assumed the role of a servant and washed their feet. This he said was by way of an example for their attitudes and behaviour from now on. Again, a command, or mandate:-

*"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love, one for another." (John 13: 34-35)*

This is worth pondering on at this time, in the great act of love for the world that Jesus was soon to accomplish....but also in the countless acts of love, care, looking out for people that are taking place here in the new order of things. I am constantly moved as I hear of more stories where people are going out of their way to support their neighbours. If we learn one thing from these strange times may it be that we grow to have a different approach to our neighbour, and that it stays with us, as we become more caring and compassionate, following our Lord's mandate.

Sharing Communion with you all is not the only aspect of tonight...after the service ends many churches strip the altars, that is, empty their church of all ornaments and decorations, leaving a stark, austere and emptied space for a vigil as the Gospel accounts turn to Jesus' tormented prayer to his Father in the Garden. Here, we are asked to look upon Jesus, as a man agonised about what he knows is to come. He asks if it were possible for this cup to be taken away, but exhausted and saddened by his disciples' inability to stay with him and keep awake, he accepts the cup of suffering.

He is betrayed by a kiss and taken away by his captors.

May our merciful God sustain us, through our difficult times. Alice