

Reflections for Maundy Thursday 2020

The evening Jesus spent with his disciples before he was arrested, quickly tried and executed, is celebrated and commemorated in the Christian tradition as one of the central moments in our history. We call this day Maundy Thursday from the traditional Latin anthem '*Mandatum novum do vobis*' meaning 'A new commandment I give to you' John 13:34. We celebrate the Holy Communion marking the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples and thanking God for Christ's gift of himself to his church. Sometimes we re-enact his act of the foot-washing as a way of holding up Jesus' humility and service as a model for our Christian living.

I always find this moment deeply moving as it brings home the power of friendship, love and commitment to one's friends and family. The disciples and group of women who followed Jesus had become his second family, his sisters and brothers. That evening their professed friendship and commitment were tested and found much wanting. The atmosphere was charged as we read in the gospels. Jesus knew the meaning of the events, but his friends seemed to lack understanding. If they understood, they didn't like what they saw and heard was about to happen. They reacted differently to the reality in front of them. Judas decided to go ahead with his betrayal. Peter was determined to fight for Jesus – cutting the servant's ear and being rebuked by Jesus. Later, he would try to follow Jesus while others went into hiding. Towards the end, the gospels tell us that Mary – Jesus's mother – and the disciple Jesus loved were standing by the cross; quite a range of reactions.

This has made me reflect on the way we are responding to the crisis we are living through. I thought of a story I heard a few days ago of an Italian medical doctor who was gravely ill on a ventilator in hospital, who insisted that his ventilator be given to a much younger patient in the next bed who was in more pain than him. It was said that the next day the doctor lost his life. I thought of the pictures showing people sunbathing when we all have been asked to stay at home to save the NHS, protect ourselves and others. I thought of the Chief medical adviser who instructed the public to stay at home and then sneaked out to travel to her second home. Alongside these there are the many acts of love, care and service which are being performed by individuals up and down the country. Some of them because they feel they are following in Jesus' footsteps.

My prayer is that as we join Jesus on this evening of Maundy Thursday, as we join the disciples in their pain and confusion, we ask Jesus to help us to see in those kind acts of kindness and generosity a proper reaction to the love and care Jesus showed to his disciples on that evening by washing their feet and sharing the bread and wine with them.

May Jesus be in the centre of all we are sharing this Holy Week and beyond.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, on this day we remember your sharing the bread and wine
with your disciples as a simple expression of fellowship
with one who would soon betray you,
one who would deny you, and others who would abandon you.
We remember your anguish in Gethsemane
as you faced the awful and awesome cost of your calling.
Help us to learn from your great love,
and how much you paid for our sake.
Guide us into the footsteps of your life and ministry
so that our own lives and doings reflect your love and service.

Amen

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