

The Old Testament: Exodus 12:1-14

Reader: A Reading from the Book of Exodus.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Epistle: I Corinthians 11:23-26

Reader: A Reading from the First Letter of Paul to the
Corinthians.

I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that 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 also, 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 the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

The Holy Gospel: John 13:1-17,31b-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."

Psalm 116:1,10-17

- 1 I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of
my supplication, *
because he has inclined his ear to me whenever
I called upon him.
- 10 How shall I repay the Lord*
for all the good things he has done for me?
- 11 I will lift up the cup of salvation *
and call upon the Name of the Lord.
- 12 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord*
in the presence of all his people.
- 13 Precious in the sight of the Lord*
is the death of his servants.
- 14 O Lord, I am your servant; *
I am your servant and the child of your handmaid;
you have freed me from my bonds.
- 15 I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving *
and call upon the Name of the Lord.
- 16 I will fulfill my vows to the Lord*
in the presence of all his people,
- 17 In the courts of the Lord's house, *
in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.
Hallelujah!

Maundy Thursday—Years A, B, C

Welcome to our church. Tonight's Eucharist on the eve of Good Friday begins the Sacred Triduum or Three Sacred Days of our redemption. This is a celebration: a celebration of our Lord's institution of the sacrament of his Body and Blood—but it is pervaded by the shadow of the Cross.

Jesus gathered with his disciples in the context of the greatest of all events in Israel's redemption: the Exodus and Passover. Yet the normal joy of such an evening was muted by betrayal, failure of his friends to understand what he was doing, and his own fear of what was to come. It was a farewell dinner in which Jesus, by washing his disciples' feet, sought to illustrate one final time the character of love and ministry which is central in the life to which he calls us: self-giving love to the point of dying for one's friends.

We hear the ancient instructions for celebrating the Passover; Paul's account of the institution of the Eucharist; and John's account of the moment when Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

After Holy Communion tonight, the liturgy will not end (it continues tomorrow, Saturday, and Sunday when it comes to its conclusion). In many churches, we will take the Sacrament which remains tonight and place it on the Altar of Repose where it will be available for Holy Communion on Good Friday. You are invited to keep vigil there tonight in response to our Lord's question: "Could you not watch with me one hour?"

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