

Reflection for Maundy Thursday Yr A

When David invited me to preach on Maundy Thursday, the world was a very different place to what it is now. If anything I was somewhat in awe of being the preacher on what for many people is one of the most important and significant days of the Christian Calendar. A day that this year is very different from what years, or in my, and many other cases, decades of past history have brought us to expect. So tonight I don't get to put on my white Alb and Blue girdle, and Yvette who was, I believe, to have been Deacon doesn't get to assist David in washing feet – instead our liturgy invites us to do that at home. And I don't get to deliver this reflection from the security of a lectern, but must hope that some of you will read it, whenever the mood takes you. So does that make it 'not a sermon' ? I don't know if my not standing at a Lectern, not wearing an Alb and so on makes much difference. It may allow you to read my thoughts at another, more conducive time. Maybe more – or less?- people will engage with it. There won't be the usual opportunity to tell me what you thought so comments to john.parkin@blueyonder.co.uk are welcome.

'May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be now and always acceptable in your sight, O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer'.

There- I've written the 'magic words' from the end of Psalm 19 which might make this a sermon ,I don't think I can do any more than offer you some words of Reflection tonight, and leave you to make of them what you will.

Tonight is a night for remembering – but what should we remember?

Observant Jews would recall the Exodus,(our first reading) the Leaving of Slavery in Egypt. I'll not get into the arguments that keep scholars busy about just how many people actually left -I'll leave that to Cecil B deMille and 'The Ten Commandments' ('a cast of thousands' has become part of the language)(I wondered while writing this just how many people would remember seeing the film when it first was released with the special effects of the parting of the Red Sea). The readings tell us that Jesus was keeping the Passover with his friends, a meal that we would in other times have recalled in the Eucharist, which we could not celebrate in Church tonight but which has been celebrated for us .

(That's the chunk that's cut out of tonight's Gospel reading - the observant among you will have noticed that verses 18-31a are omitted from John's Gospel)

And we would have recalled the act of service of Washing of feet, - it was some 50 or more years ago that I really appreciated what this meant, and why it was seen as something to be done for visitors. I had spent the day wandering around Istanbul wearing sandals, and at the end of the day my feet were **black**, so that washing my feet was as much a

necessity as a luxury.

And we could remember much more recent things, for tonight is a Thursday, and we have begun to make a habit (if two weeks before tonight is enough to form a habit) of standing in our porches to applaud the workers of the NHS, some of whom, like Jesus, though perhaps not owning the Name , have made the final offering of their lives, in the hope that others might live. Our Order of Service invites us to make this a part of our worship tonight, so do whatever the spirit moves you to do.

I guess that many of you, unless you are avid readers of the current Church Times, may not know the name of Fr Guiseppe Berardelli. He was the the parish priest of a place in Italy. As a Roman Catholic priest aged 72 he is presumably without a family of his own, but in Hospital, on a ventilator, he heard of a younger person without a ventilator, insisted on giving his own to the younger person , and was himself soon dead. That sort of self sacrifice needs, I think a proper memorial – and that leaves us with the question – just what would constitute a proper memorial for such a one as he?

And today Her Majesty the Queen should have been handing out the Maundy Money(Maundy is a word derived from the word used to name Jesus' ' commandment ' (*Mandatum* in Latin)to '*Love one another as I have loved you*' and it forms the basis of a Taizé chant which will be familiar to many of us. She should have been doing this at St George's Chapel Windsor – at 93 going on 94 that's no easy task as she's supposed to give it to a number of pensioners equal to her own age. The custom of washing their feet in emulation of Jesus has fallen into disuse – those of you so minded can research the subject for yourselves. So we and the Nation remember those who have given lives of service to their communities and may themselves be old enough to be 'at risk' in the present circumstances.

And last Sunday Her Majesty gave one of her rare(and all the more significant because of it's rarity– she is not given to wasting words) addresses , words which offer us hope for the future – and that is what I hope to leave you with, for the future lies open before us. We may not – will not - be here to see it come to pass, but the Universe has many billions of years yet to run to work out God's purpose for it.